MIDDLE EAST@WAR No.39

CZECHOSLOVAK ARMS EXPORTS TO THE MIDDLE EAST

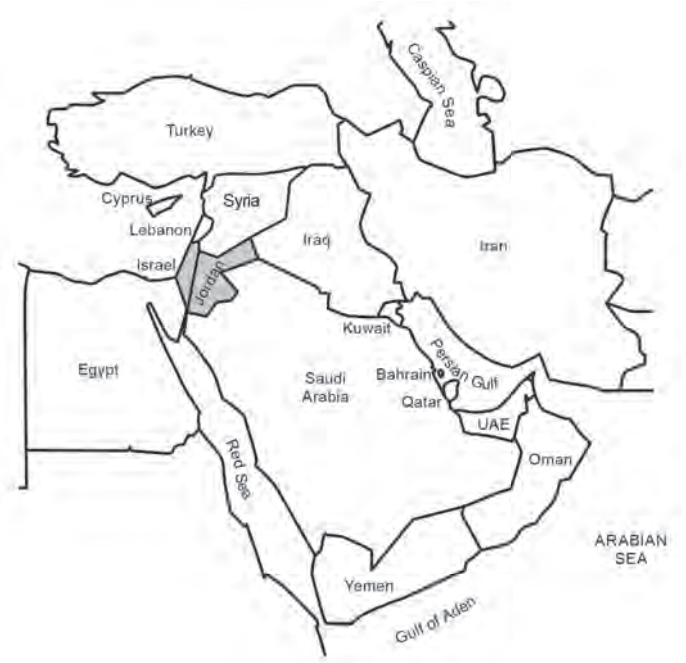
VOLUME 1: ORIGINS, ISRAEL AND JORDAN 1948-1989

Martin Smisek

MIDDLE EAST@WAR SERIES

CONTENTS

Abbreviations		2
Introduction: Moscow Is The Boss		2
1	Israel (Bap, Operation DI)	42
2	Jordan (Operation 113, Country 614)	60
Notes		65
About the Author		70



In order to simplify the use of this book, all names, locations and geographic designations are as provided in *The Times World Atlas*, or other traditionally accepted major sources of reference, as of the time of described events. Similarly, Arabic names are romanised and transcripted rather than transliterated. For example: the definite article al- before words starting with 'sun letters' is given as pronounced instead of simply as al- (which is the usual practice for non-Arabic speakers in most English-language literature and media). Instead of using the diacritical marks to represent the letter 'ayn, double a is used, while names like 'Faisal/Feisal' are spelled as 'Faysal'.

Helion & Company Limited
Unit 8 Amherst Business Centre, Budbrooke Road, Warwick CV34 5WE, England
Tel. 01926 499 619
Email: info@helion.co.uk Website: www.helion.co.uk Twitter: @helionbooks Visit our blog http://blog.helion.co.uk/

Published by Helion & Company 2021
Designed and typeset by Farr out Publications, Wokingham, Berkshire
Cover designed by Paul Hewitt, BattlefieldD esign (www.battlefield- design.co.uk)

Text © Martin Smisek 2021
Photographs © as individually credited
Colour artwork © Tom Cooper 2021
Maps and diagrams © Tom Cooper 2021

Cover photo: Volunteers of the Haganah Brigade with a Czechoslovak-made 7.92mm vz. 37 machine gun in 1948. It is not clear if they are undergoing training in Czechoslovakia or are already in in Israel. Visible to the rear is an International Harvester Company Farmall M tractor, as often used to move heavy equipment. (Czechoslovak Press Offic e, via Martin Smisek)

Cover artwork: An Avia S.199 of the Israeli Defence Force/Air Force, as exported by Czechoslovakia to Israel in 1948. (Artwork by Tom Cooper)

Every reasonable effor t has been made to trace copyright holders and to obtain their permission for the use of copyright material. The author and publisher apologise for any errors or omissions in this work, and would be grateful if notified of any corrections that should be incorporated in future reprints or editions of this book.

ISBN 978-1-804511-11-4

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data.
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form, or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the express written consent of Helion & Company Limited.

For details of other military history titles published by Helion & Company Limited contact the above address, or visit our website: http://www.helion.co.uk. We always welcome receiving book proposals from prospective authors.

ABBREVIATIONS

CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
HTS	*Hlavní technická správa* (Main Technical Administration)
KSČ	*Komunistická strana Československa* (Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (Komunistická strana Československa)
ÚV KSČ	*Ústřední výbor Komunistické strany Československa* (Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia)
IDF	Israel Defense Force
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NKVD	*Narodnyy komissariat vnutrennikh del* (People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs)
SNB	*Sbor národní bezpečnosti* (National Security Corps)
StB	*Státní bezpečnost* (State Security)
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
VAAZ	*Vojenská akademie Antonína Zápotockého* (Antonín Zápotocký Military Academy)
ZF VAAZ	*Zahraniční fakulta Vojenské akademie Antonína Zápotockého* (Foreign Faculty of the Antonín Zápotocký Military Academy)
VTA AZ	*Vojenská technická akademie Antonína Zápotockého* (Antonín Zápotocký Military Technical Academy)
VVLŠ	*Vysoká vojenská letecká škola* (Military Aviation University)
ZTS	*Závody ťažkého strojárstva* (Heavy Machinery Plants)

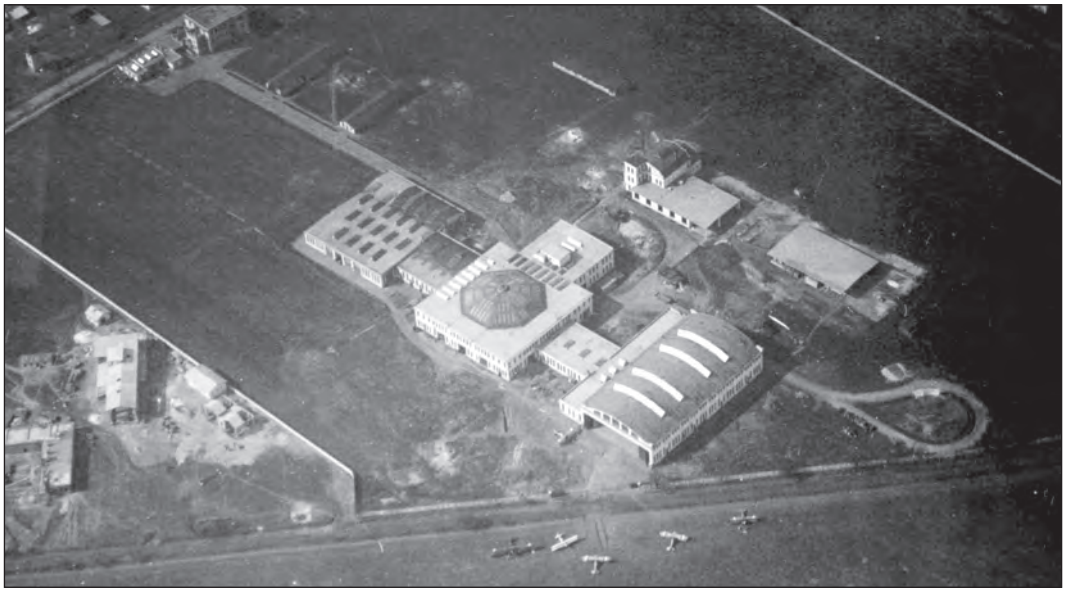
INTRODUCTION: MOSCOW IS THE BOSS

During the Cold War, arms exports to Third World countries – mostly states with colonial pasts in Africa, Latin America and Asia that remained non-aligned with either the North Atlantic Treaty Organization or the Warsaw Pact – played a significant role in the global politics of the Soviet Bloc. The supply of armaments not only created political and military dependence in Third World countries, but also made numerous opportunities for various forms of communist infiltration. Contracts for arms shipments were coupled with agreements for military assistance, under which Eastern Bloc experts, instructors and advisors served in the respective African, Latin American and Asian states. The buyers of weapons, often countries with limited financial resources, were provided with long-term favourable credits not only for the purchase of arms but also for the acquisition of civilian products. Besides, their students had the opportunity to attend various military, police and civilian schools and training facilities in the Soviet Union and its communist allies in Central and Eastern Europe.

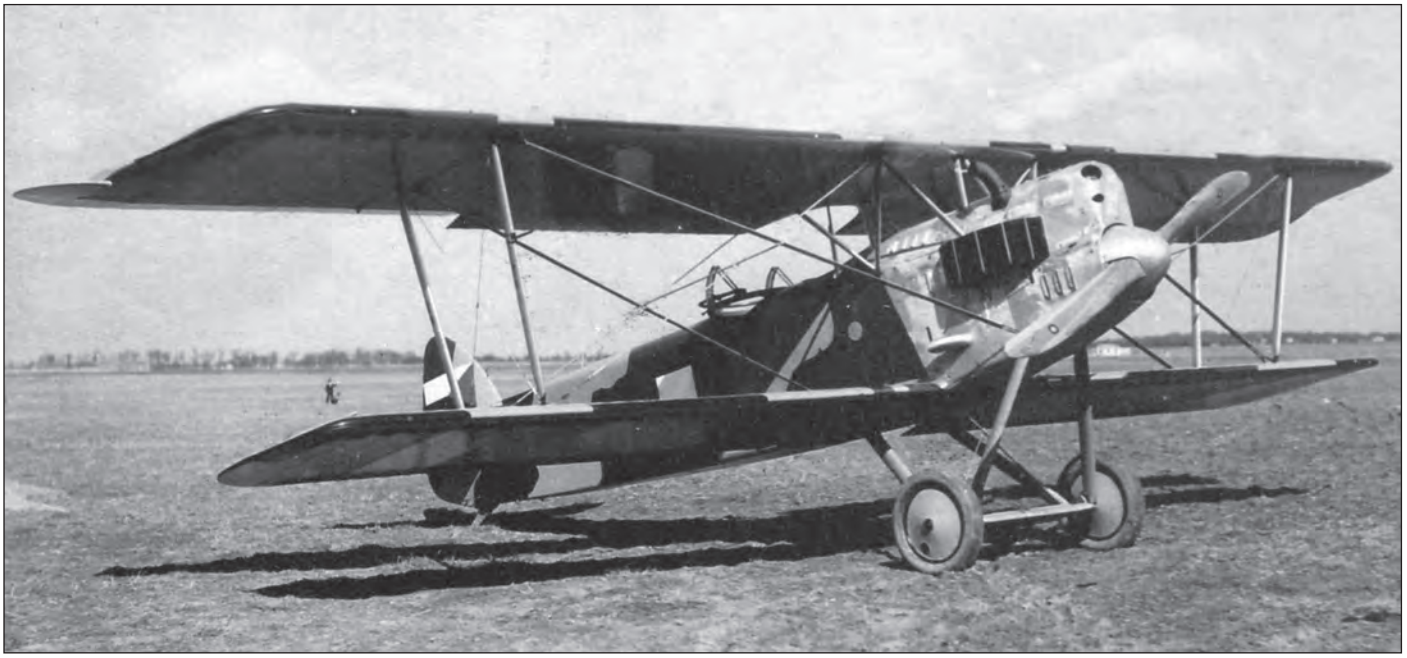
Communist Czechoslovakia played a very active role in these developments throughout the Cold War. Indeed, in the 1980s, Prague was the second largest arms manufacturer of the entire Warsaw Pact and the world's seventh-largest arms exporter. The most important clients for Czechoslovak weapons in the Third World after the Second World War had for a long time been countries from the Middle East: at first Israel, which was several years later replaced by its Arab enemies, Egypt and Syria. While Damascus remained loyal to Czechoslovak arms until the end of communist rule in Prague in 1989, Cairo ceased to obtain armaments from Czechoslovakia in 1977 due to instructions from Moscow which forced Prague to stop arms shipments to Egypt altogether. During the 1970s, the role of Egypt was assumed by Iraq and Libya, which regularly ordered large quantities of Czechoslovak weapons. In the meantime, Prague provided important shipments of armaments for countries like North Yemen, Morocco and Algeria.

The deliveries were complemented by the training activities of Czechoslovak military instructors in the Middle East and the training of Arab military personnel in various training establishments of the Czechoslovak People's Army (*Československá lidová armáda*). Simultaneously, Czechoslovakia established around a dozen military repair plants for the maintenance and overhaul of delivered arms, several armament factories and even military schools in a number of Middle Eastern countries.

Moreover, the shipments of arms to the Middle East were of immense economic importance for Prague. During communist rule, the Czechoslovak currency – the Czechoslovak koruna (*Koruna československá*) – was not freely convertible in international trade. However, Czechoslovakia needed raw materials and products unavailable within the Soviet-led Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, and thus also needed hard currency (Pounds sterling, the United States Dollar or the German Mark) to obtain these goods. The way to realise hard currency income was for the state to export its own production. In addition to foreign exchange, it was possible in this way to obtain raw materials using barter. These materials could then be re-exported or used directly for the needs of the national economy, which allowed the hard currency to either earn profit or at least be saved for the purchase of other goods. From



Letov aircraft factory, seen in 1926. (via Martin Smisek)



An A-12 reconnaissance fighter, manufactured by the Letov – subsequently Aero – Works in the 1920s. (via Martin Smisek)

Prague's point of view, the selling of weapons to the Middle East was one of the most lucrative ways to obtain such hard currency.

ARMS HERITAGE

The production of arms had a long tradition in Czechoslovakia. Indeed, guns from the Skoda Works (*Škodovy závody*) had been shipped to various parts of the world since the 1890s, when Czechoslovakia was still part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Even before the First World War, Skoda became the largest arms manufacturer in Austria-Hungary and one of the most important weapons producers in the world, specialising mainly in the production of heavy guns and related ammunition, not only for the Austro-Hungarian Navy and Army. During the Great War, huge sums were invested into expanding armament production capacities, which led to the situation in which most Austro-Hungarian arms factories were on Czechoslovak territory.

Thus, already at the time of its official establishment on 28 October 1918, the newly independent Czechoslovak Republic had foundations for a strong arms industry. This status was further enhanced by the need to reequip the fledgling Czechoslovak Army (*Československá armáda*). Its early development was limited by non-uniform armament, which consisted of weapons of various origins acquired from the stocks of the former Austro-Hungarian Army or brought by the Czechoslovak Legion (*Československé legie*), supplemented by purchases of war surpluses from abroad. Hence, it was decided to equip the Czechoslovak Army with domestic weapons so that it would not be dependent on imports. Gradually, numerous new arms factories were established, which managed to supply not only the local armed forces but also to successfully export their products. Among the most famous were Zbrojovka, which produced small arms, Skoda, renowned for its production of artillery armament, and the Avia, Aero and Letov aircraft plants.

Significant arms exports did not begin until the end of the 1920s, after plans to equip the Czechoslovak Army had been fulfilled. Initially, the exports were composed mainly of infantry and artillery armament, ammunition and explosives, which were later complemented by combat aircraft and tanks. Czechoslovak arms factories focused mainly on deliveries to Czechoslovakia's allies within the Little Entente,[1] Romania and Yugoslavia, as well as to countries in the Middle East such as Afghanistan, Turkey and Persia (from 1935, Iran). China played a significant role in Czechoslovak arms exports from 1927, taking large quantities of small arms manufactured by Zbrojovka. Czechoslovak armaments were exported also to the Baltic states, while several consignments went to numerous Latin American countries such as Argentina, Bolivia,

Skoda Works (Škodovy závody) seen in the 1930s. (via Martin Smisek)

A pair of LT vz. 35 light tanks, which achieved quite an export success in the 1930s. (via Martin Smisek)

The OA vz. 30 armoured car of the Czechoslovak Army in the 1930s. (via Martin Smisek)

Czechoslovak infantry with a locally-designed and manufactured vz. 26 light machine gun. (via Martin Smisek)

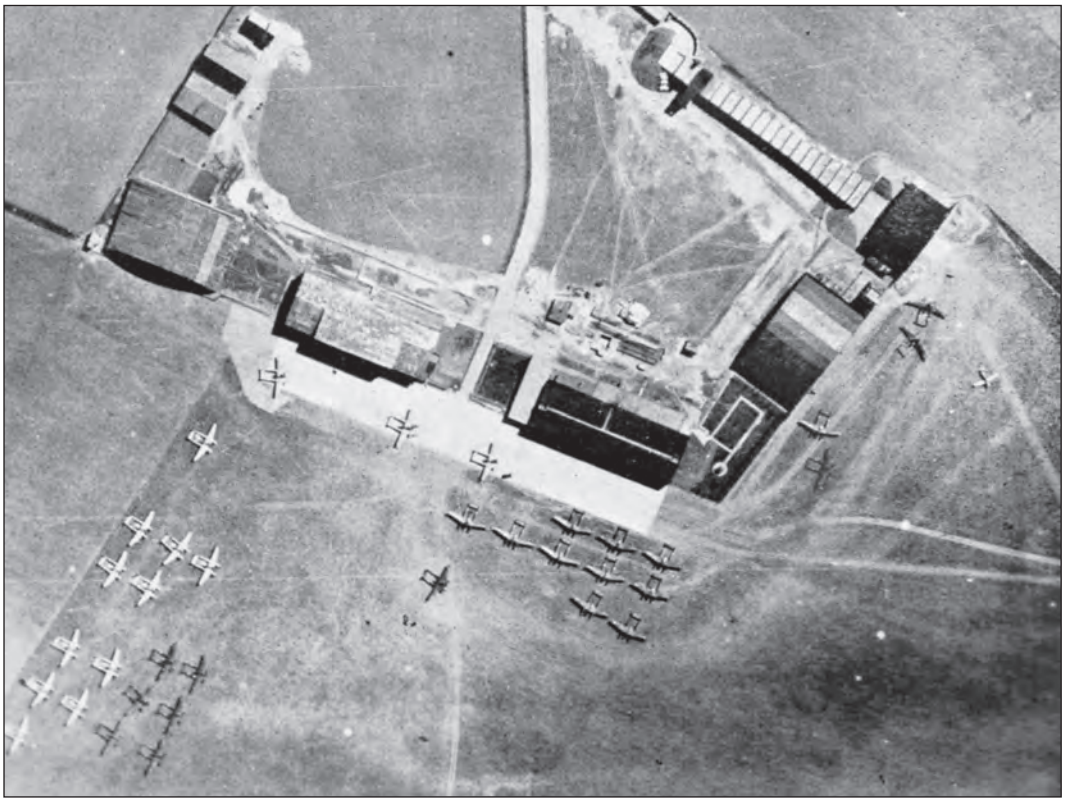
Brazil, Chile, Columbia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru, Salvador, Uruguay and Venezuela.

The position of Czechoslovakia in the global arms trade culminated in 1934 and 1935, when Prague became the largest armament exporter in the world with a 27 and 24.4 percent market share respectively. In 1936 and 1937, Czechoslovakia had third place with market shares of 15.5 and 11.9 percent. In 1938, arms shipments accounted for 7 percent of all exports of goods from Czechoslovakia.

The establishment of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia following the German invasion in March 1939, and the outbreak of the Second World War in September of the same year, brought even more intensive development of the arms industry in Czech and Slovak territories (between March 1939 and April 1945, Slovakia existed as a nominally independent, partially recognised client state of Nazi Germany). Although most of the production was intended for the German Wehrmacht, throughout the war the export of weapons continued not only for allies of the Third Reich but also for selected neutral countries. Moreover, during the occupation, the Wehrmacht captured large stocks of the armament of the Czechoslovak Army which was later used for Nazi aggression around Europe. A typical example was the LT vz. 35 light tank, which was employed by the Wehrmacht under the name Panzerkampfwagen 35(t) in the Polish campaign, the Battle of France and the subsequent invasion of the Soviet Union.[2]

EARLY POST-WAR DEVELOPMENTS

Although situated in the deep hinterland of the Nazi empire, the Czechoslovak arms industry still suffered serious damage in the last days of the Second World War. During a raid by bombers of the United



A reconnaissance photograph of the Aero Works, as of 1942. (via Martin Smisek)

Perhaps the most famous armoured vehicle manufactured during the Second World War by factories in the occupied Czechoslovakia: the Jagdpanzer 38(t), nicknamed *Hetzer*. After 1945, the Skoda Works manufactured additional examples not only for the Czechoslovak Army, but also exported 158 vehicles equipped with the more powerful 7.5cm L/48 gun to Switzerland. (VÚA-VHA Praha)

States 15th Air Force on 7 July 1944, the Reichswerke Hermann Göring (the former Skoda Works) at Dubnica nad Váhom was largely destroyed. Then the Böhmische-Mährische Maschinenfabrik (former Českomoravská-Kolben-Daněk) factory in Prague was bombed by 143 B-24 Liberators of the 304th Bombardment Wing on 25 March 1945. Among other products, the well-known Jagdpanzer 38(t) tank destroyer (sometimes referred to a the *Hetzer*) was manufactured there. During the same raid, the nearby Aero plant, producing Siebel Si 204 D transport and trainer aircraft, was also hit. Simultaneously, 97 B-24s from the 55th Bombardment Wing struck adjacent air bases, including the factory airfield of Avia that manufactured the Arado Ar 96 B trainer and its Ar 396 variant from non-strategic materials. Then, on 25 April, 307 B-17G Flying Fortress bombers of the 1st Air Division bombed out the last surviving large Nazi arms factory – Reichswerke Hermann Göring in Plzeň – devastating 70 percent of the entire complex. Retreating German forces also severely damaged arms factories at Dubnica and Adamov. Other weapons-producing plants were hit by smaller air raids, such as Zbrojovka Brno and Česká zbrojovka Strakonice.[3]

Nevertheless, since the main combat operations of the war avoided Czechoslovakia, it largely retained its industrial capabilities and its important industrial centres remained relatively undamaged. Therefore, the Czechoslovak economy had a better starting position than many other European countries involved in the conflict. According to the first post-war concepts, the Czechoslovak Army after 1945 was to be a modern and mobile force with adequate firepower. However, a lack of funds meant that even at the end of the 1940s, the Czechoslovak Army still operated Second World War military hardware of German, Soviet, American and British origin. Czechoslovak arms factories were mostly dependent on repairs of captured German equipment or the completion of already existing weapons that were originally developed for the Wehrmacht. Thus, the early post-war years brought an initial wave of the introduction of civilian production programmes into several armament plants, some of which remained there permanently. The situation was further complicated by the lack of export opportunities, which meant that from 1945–50 the Czechoslovak arms industry almost ceased to exist.[4]

Between 17 and 25 February 1948, the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (*Komunistická strana Československa*, KSČ), with Soviet backing, assumed undisputed control over the government of Czechoslovakia, marking the onset of four decades of communist rule in the country. The communist coup d'état brought totalitarianism, repression of much of Czech and Slovak society, economic decline

and the joining of Czechoslovakia to the Soviet Bloc. Changes also included a new approach to the arms industry and the development of the Czechoslovak armed forces[5] on Soviet lines because the danger of a Third World War was not just a matter of Stalin's apocalyptic visions. At a Cominform meeting in November 1949, the attending communist delegates were informed by the Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Andreyevich Suslov, about Stalin's thesis on the impending world conflict, which it was said would determine the victory of communism. Consequently, the Soviet Bloc armies were to be fully armed and ready to fight by the end of 1952. Furthermore, in June 1950, a local conflict began on the Korean Peninsula which had the potential to escalate into a full-scale global war.

THE THREE-YEAR ARMS PLAN

Even before these events, the resolution of the IX Congress of the KSČ (25–29 May 1949) set as an important and permanent task 'to eliminate shortcomings in the establishment of a fully combat-ready army and to improve the state's defensive capacity as quickly as possible'. In doing this, the main emphasis was placed on the unification of armament with the Soviet Army.

At a top secret meeting held in Moscow between 8 and 11 January 1951, respective communist party leaders and defence ministers accepted a binding protocol setting out the numbers of Soviet Bloc armed forces, military hardware and weapons to be achieved by the end of 1953. Following negotiations in Moscow, all the armed forces of the Soviet Bloc countries were to be prepared for 'active defence' by 1953, as it was seriously considered that in 1953 or 1954 a new armed conflict could break out between the East and West.

Based on the resolution from the IX Congress and in connection with the outbreak of the Korean War, the Political Secretariat (*Politický sekretariát*) of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (*Ústřední výbor Komunistické strany*

TABLE 1: THE MOST IMPORTANT PLANTS OF THE CZECHOSLOVAK ARMS INDUSTRY, 1961[7]

FACTORY	PLANT	LOCALITY	PRODUCTION	NOTE
Strojírny VZLET	main plant	Letňany (today part of Prague)	components for military jet airplanes	former Rudý Letov (today Latécoère Česká republika)
	subsidiary plant	Vodochody	military jet airplanes	future Aero Vodochody (today AERO Vodochody AEROSPACE)
Strojírny první pětiletky	main plant	Kunovice	components for military jet airplanes	later Let Kunovice (today Aircraft Industries)
Závody Jana Švermy	main plant	Prague – Jinonice	jet engines	former Walter, later Motorlet (today GE Aviation Czech at Prague – Letňany)
	testing facility	Stará Boleslav	testing of engines	
TECHNOMETRA	main plant	Prague	aircraft instruments	
	subsidiary plant (Radovan)	Radotín	aircraft instruments	
	subsidiary plant (Rudý kovák)	Semily	aircraft instruments	successor company CHARVÁT AXL
	subsidiary plant (Jihlavan)	Jihlava	aircraft instruments	today JIHLAVAN
	subsidiary plant (Jihočeské strojírny)	Velešín	aircraft instruments	today Jihostroj
TESLA Bratislava	subsidiary plant	Valašské Meziříčí	transformers	
TESLA Hloubětín	main plant	Prague	radios	today TESLA
TESLA Karlín	main plant	Prague	radios	
TESLA Lanškroun	main plant	Lanškroun	components for radars	
TESLA Pardubice	facility Zámeček	Pardubice	radars	successor companies ELDIS Pardubice, RETIA, ERA and T-CZ
	subsidiary plant	Liberec	dosimeters	
TESLA Rožnov	main plant	Rožnov pod Radhoštěm	military electronics	
ARITMA Praha	subsidiary plant	Prague – Vysočany	military electronics	
MEOPTA Přerov	main plant	Přerov	infrared night sighting devices	today Meopta – optika
	subsidiary plant	Bratislava	artillery optics	
MEOPTA Praha	main plant	Prague – Košíře	artillery optics	
PAL Magneton Kroměříž	main plant	Kroměříž	gyrostabilisers	today MAGNETON

FACTORY	PLANT	LOCALITY	PRODUCTION	NOTE
Automobilové závody Letňany	main plant	Letňany (today part of Prague)	military trucks (Praga V3S)	former Avia
Tatra Kopřivnice	main plant	Kopřivnice	military trucks	today TATRA TRUCKS
KAROSA	subsidiary plant	Brno	mobile workshops	the main plant at Vysoké Mýto producing buses is today part of Iveco Bus
	subsidiary plant	Ivančice	mobile workshops	later Avia Ivančice (today IVACAR Ivančice)
ORLIČAN	main plant	Choceň	installation of radios into vehicles	former Beneš-Mráz (today subsidiary plant of Kögel)
Závody Říjnové revoluce	main plant	Vsetín	machine guns, ammunition	today ZVI
	subsidiary plant	Jablůnka	ammunition	
	subsidiary plant	Bojkovice	ammunition	later ZEVETA (today ZEVETA AMMUNITION)
	subsidiary plant	Slavičín	ammunition	later Vlárské strojírny
	subsidiary plant	Uherský Brod	machine guns, assault rifles	today Česká zbrojovka Uherský Brod
	design bureau	Brno		
Blanické strojírny	main plant	Vlašim	ammunition	today Sellier & Bellot
	design bureau	Prague		
Konštrukta	design bureau	Trenčín	development and design of armament and ammunition	today KONŠTRUKTA-Defence
Závody J.V. Stalina	main plant	Martin	tanks	later Závody ťažkého strojárstva Martin
Podpolianské strojárne Detva	main plant	Detva	armoured personnel carriers	later Závody ťažkého strojárstva Detva (today PPS Group)
Závody K.J. Vorošilova	main plant	Dubnica nad Váhom	artillery armament, tank guns, gun stabilisers	later Závody ťažkého strojárstva Dubnica nad Váhom (today ZTS – ŠPECIÁL)
	subsidiary plant (Strojárne 9. mája Kubrá)	Trenčín	anti-aircraft guns	
Adamovské strojírny	main plant	Adamov	ammunition components	
	subsidiary plant	Polička	mine clearing equipment	today STV GROUP
	subsidiary plant	Dubnica nad Váhom	loading of ammunition	later Závody všeobecného strojárstva (today ZVS holding)
	subsidiary plant	Humpolec	ammunition components	
	subsidiary plant (Novoborské strojírny)	Nový Bor	fuses for artillery ammunition	
Považské strojárne	main plant	Považská Bystrica	shell cases	
	subsidiary plant (Vihorlat)	Snina	shell cases	
KRAS	main plant	Chornice	parachutes	
	subsidiary plant	Bystřice nad Pernštejnem	camouflage uniforms	

Československa, *ÚV KSČ*) adopted a principal resolution in late February 1951 that had three primary tasks:

1) To equip the Czechoslovak Army with new military hardware, manufactured mainly under Soviet licences within the next three years so that the Czechoslovak armed forces are ready for possible 'active defence'.
2) To organise arms production into foundations, from which it would be possible to mobilise Czechoslovak industry if necessary.
3) To create preconditions for assisting other friendly communist states in deliveries of military hardware for their armed forces.

The last point was the result of Moscow's system of obligations – while Czechoslovakia was obliged to produce immense quantities of arms, the other Soviet Bloc countries were obliged to buy large numbers of Czechoslovak weapons.

The concept of maximum weapons production from 1951–53 was called the three-year arms plan. Building the army and the arms industry thus became the highest priority, which the life of the whole of society had to submit to. The 4 percent share of military production in total industrial production in 1950 rose to 27 percent in 1953. The cost of financing the Ministry of National Defence (*Ministerstvo národní obrany*) increased from less than 18 billion CSK (Czechoslovak koruna) in 1949 to 66 billion CSK in 1953. During that time, defence steadily accounted for almost 20 percent of the annual state budget. This fact was kept secret, as state expenditure on defence of only less than 10 percent of the national budget was officially acknowledged.

As in other Soviet Bloc states, such as the German Democratic Republic and the Polish People's Republic, the development of Czechoslovak heavy industry and the large-scale arming of the Czechoslovak Army led to the militarisation of the economy and brought the country to the brink of economic collapse. Declining living standards, supply problems and shortages of basic goods increased dissatisfaction among the population and led to protests which erupted in Czechoslovakia after the currency reform from 1 June 1953 which was motivated, among other causes, by excessive expenditure on the production of weapons and a massive build-up of the Czechoslovak Army.

The three-year arms plan assumed the maximum utilisation of the production capacities of the existing armaments plants and their expansion, the transfer of weapons production to other mechanical engineering plants and extensive construction of new factories. For strategic reasons (the proximity to a potential front line against the West), a significant part of arms production was moved from the western section of the country to its Slovak eastern part. The construction of new mechanical engineering plants and arms factories was also intended to address the requirement of the industrialisation of Slovakia.

Extensive investments were made in the renovation of traditional arms factories (which had since been renamed and acquired the names of distinguished Communists) such as Závody V.I. Lenina in Plzeň (formerly Škodovy závody), Zbrojovka Brno, Závody přesného strojírenství Uherský Brod (formerly a subsidiary plant of Česká zbrojovka Strakonice, the future Česká zbrojovka Uherský Brod), Závody Říjnové revoluce in Vsetín (formerly a subsidiary plant of Zbrojovka Brno), Blanické strojírny Vlašim (formerly Sellier & Bellot), Závody Jiřího Dimitrova Letňany (formerly Avia) and Motorlet Jinonice (formerly Walter). Impressive financial resources resulted in the expansion of some existing factories (Závody K.J. Vorošilova and Závody všeobecného strojárstva – both of which were formerly the subsidiary plant of Škodovy závody, Synthesia in Semtín), as well as the construction of completely new production facilities: Závody J.V. Stalina at Martin (the future Závody ťažkého strojárstva Martin), Podpolianské strojárne Detva (the future Závody ťažkého strojárstva Detva), Středočeské strojírny (the future Aero Vodochody) and Let Kunovice. The factories constituted during the three-year arms plan formed the backbone of the Czechoslovak arms industry until the end of the Cold War.

Soviet technical advisors had been working in all arms plants since 1951, and their numbers had been steadily increasing with the provision of production licences and technical documentation from the Soviet Union. In total, there were more than 220 of them serving in Czechoslovakia until 1954.

From the outset, the overambitious arms production plan could not be fulfilled. In 1951, it achieved only about 65 percent of its target, as serial production began without completed development and thorough testing of prototypes, and new manufacturing capacities were often built without careful design preparation. There were also constant changes in the requirements of the Ministry of National Defence, which resulted in a lack of materials, manpower and funds. The insufficient number of engineering staff and the wide range of manufactured weapons caused additional difficulties. The situation was further aggravated by the late delivery of technical documentation from the Soviet Union or its poor translation. The pressure on the maximum production output together with an insufficiently skilled workforce caused a large number of rejects, with additional massive financial losses, and products of poor quality. Indeed, the manufacturing deficiencies generated a wave of warranty claims from all Soviet Bloc countries that operated Czechoslovak-made armament at that time. For example, unsatisfactory manufacturing quality caused several accidents involving B-33 ground-attack aircraft of the Czechoslovak Air Force.

Despite all these problems and difficulties, the Czechoslovak Army was gradually and completely rearmed between 1951 and 1954. Its armament consisted for the most part of new materiel delivered from the USSR and manufactured under Soviet licence in Czechoslovakia. However, due to Moscow's absolute unwillingness to provide technical documentation for the latest Soviet weapons, except for jet fighters, the Czechoslovak arms industry manufactured largely licence versions of outdated armament that had been used by the Red Army in the Second World War. Simultaneously, this situation led to an abrupt reduction in indigenous research and development of military technology, except for small arms. Although this situation improved in the following years, Czechoslovakia forever lost the capability to completely develop its own tank or combat airplane.[6]

THE CZECHOSLOVAK TANKOGRAD

Although the licence production of T-34/85 tanks (and the derived SD-100 self-propelled guns) began at ČKD Sokolovo in Prague – the same plant that manufactured the Jagdpanzer 38(t) – in 1951, it continued there only until the end of 1953, when the new centre of Czechoslovak tank production became the newly established ČKD Kriváň plant at Martin (later renamed Závody J.V. Stalina, then Turčianske strojárne Martin and finally Závody ťažkého strojárstva Martin) which was to originally serve for the manufacture of presses, hammers, machines and equipment for the food and construction industry (cranes and excavators). The plant successively produced (except for supplementary civilian products –

locomotives, tractors and diesel engines) extensive numbers of T-54A, T-54AR, T-55, T-55A, T-72, T-72M and T-72M1 tanks, together with their derivatives (command tanks T-54AK, T-54ARK, T-55K, T-55AK, T-72MK, T-72M1K and Czechoslovakia-developed armoured support vehicles MT-55A, VT-55A, JVBT-55A and VT-72B). Simultaneously, additional factories for the mass production of heavy weapons were established in Slovakia. Podpolianské strojárne at Detva (later renamed Závody ťažkého strojárstva Detva) specialised not only in the production of construction machinery but mainly in the manufacture of Czechoslovak-designed armoured personnel carriers (OT-810 – a derivative of the Sd.Kfz. 251 – and later OT-62 TOPAS), licenced infantry fighting vehicles (BMP-1 and BMP-2, alias BVP-1 and BVP-2) and their derivatives (OT-62/R2, OT-62/R3, OT-62D, BPzV, AMB-S, VPV, vz. 85 PRAM-S, SVO and Bouře III). A third crucial plant was created through the extension of the existing factory of the former Škodovy závody at Dubnica nad Váhom. This facility, named initially Závody K.J. Vorošilova, was renamed Strojárske a metalurgické závody and then Závody ťažkého strojárstva Dubnica nad Váhom. This factory specialised in the production of artillery armament (including tank guns), vz. 70 and vz. 70/85 multiple rocket launchers, vz. 77 DANA self-propelled gun howitzers and BVP-1 infantry fighting vehicles. The latter were manufactured there for the Soviet Union only to offset the delivery of Soviet armament for the Czechoslovak People's Army.[8]

TABLE 2: STATISTICS OF THE CZECHOSLOVAK LICENCE PRODUCTION OF T-55 AND T-72 SERIES OF VEHICLES, 1971–90[10]

YEAR	NUMBER OF MANUFACTURED EXAMPLES			
	T-55 AND T-55A SERIES OF VEHICLES		T-72, T-72M AND T-72M1 SERIES OF VEHICLES	
	CZECHOSLOVAK PEOPLE'S ARMY	EXPORT	CZECHOSLOVAK PEOPLE'S ARMY	EXPORT
1971	297	587	-	-
1972	128	655	-	-
1973	205	542	-	-
1974	-	801	-	-
1975	-	810	-	-
1976	-	845	-	-
1977	50	780	-	-
1978	90	749	-	-
1979	110	775	-	-
1980	102	774	-	-
1981	158	579	18	-
1982	45	446	35	15
1983	30	304	85	45
1984	-	-	132	80
1985	-	-	72	180
1986	-	-	158	119
1987	-	-	100	190
1988	-	-	166	133
1989	-	-	54	68
1990	-	-	97	35
Total	1,215	8,647	917	865

At the seventh meeting of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance in Berlin in May 1956, the establishment of a Standing Committee of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance for Cooperation in the Field of Defence Industry was approved (scientific and technical cooperation of Czechoslovak, Hungarian and Polish arms industries began in 1953, with initial negotiations on the specialisation and coordination of military hardware production and mutual deliveries between the states of the Soviet Bloc for 1956–65 taking place in Moscow from 27 February to 11 March 1956). Moscow thus enforced the administrative allocation of the so-called specialisation in the production of military hardware to individual member states. Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Warsaw Pact, Marshal of the Soviet Union Ivan Stepanovich Konev, informed Czechoslovak representatives about this concept as follows:

> The Soviet Union will manufacture and supply all countries with combat aircraft and missile technology, or some complex products for which the people's democratic states have the need of only several examples. Other types of so-called 'classic' military technology, accepted into the armament system of individual armies of people's democratic states, are to be provided by these states themselves, with full use of mutual cooperation, but without the participation of the Soviet Union.

Among many other fields, Prague was also given specialisation in the production of tanks and other armoured vehicles. Poland became a partner of Czechoslovakia in this scheme, but in comparison with the economic potential and size of both countries, tank production did not reach such a massive scale there as in Czechoslovakia. Over the years, this production increased and took on unprecedented proportions. Czechoslovakia had become one of the world's leading tank manufacturers. However, it was a very expensive position to have, not only because of the large amount of money invested in the establishment of extensive production facilities, but due to the consumption of huge quantities of imported raw materials for the production of armoured steels, the consumption of energy and the environmental aspects of this production.

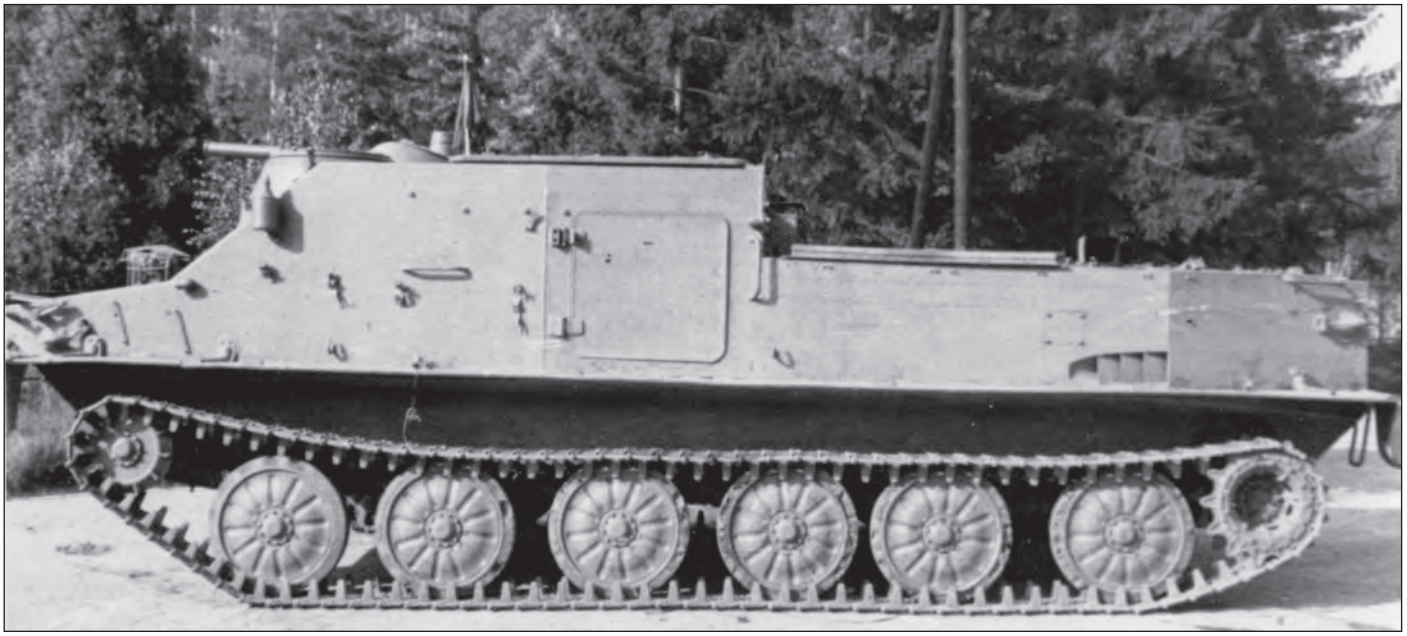
Although Moscow provided licence documentation free of charge (except for the costs for the creation of its reproductions and their shipment to Czechoslovakia), it resolutely insisted on the maintaining of the same – low – Soviet prices for armaments manufactured in

ZTS Dubnica nad Váhom, seen in the 1980s. (via Martin Smisek)

The main administrative building of Turčianské strojárne Works (later ZTS Martin), seen in the 1960s. (via Martin Smisek)

Czechoslovakia (or any other Soviet Bloc country) and delivered to member states of the Warsaw Pact. This requirement regularly caused a great deal of dissent, which, however, always diminished after additional pressure from Moscow. None of the Warsaw Pact countries could compete with the large-scale Soviet arms production due to their different economic conditions. According to the type of weapon manufactured in Czechoslovakia under licence, the actual price should have been at least 1.7–three times higher. Therefore, these financial losses had to be de facto compensated by deliveries to Third World countries that were not affected by this restriction.

Moreover, Moscow was not interested in the provision of licences for the most advanced tanks at its disposal. Thus, for the duration of the Cold War, Czechoslovakia was relegated to the role of manufacturer of armour that was considered obsolete by the Soviet military authorities. For example, the production of T-34/85 in Czechoslovakia started at a time when the manufacturing of T-54 tanks in the Ural Tank Factory No. 183 (today



The Czechoslovaks not only obtained licence rights of the Soviet-designed BTR-50 armoured personnel carrier, but introduced numerous modification to it, resulting in emergence of the OT-62 TOPAS. (VÚA-VHA Praha)

The Soviet-designed SU-100 self-propelled anti-tank gun (built on the chasis of the T-34 tank) was designated SD-100. This example was photographed while undergoing trials in the early 1950s. (VÚA-VHA Praha)

Uralvagonzavod) at Nizhny Tagil was already in full swing. In addition, the Soviet practice of providing technical documentation without licence fees did not last forever. The USSR was a failing empire in the late 1970s, which meant that Czechoslovakia had to buy from Moscow the licence for the production of T-72 tanks.

A total of 19,947 tanks of the T-34/85, T-54A, T-54AR, T-55, T-55A, T-72, T-72M and T-72M1 series were produced in Czechoslovakia between 1953 and 1990 in all versions (combat tanks, command tanks, armoured recovery vehicles, armoured crane vehicles and armoured vehicle-launched bridges).

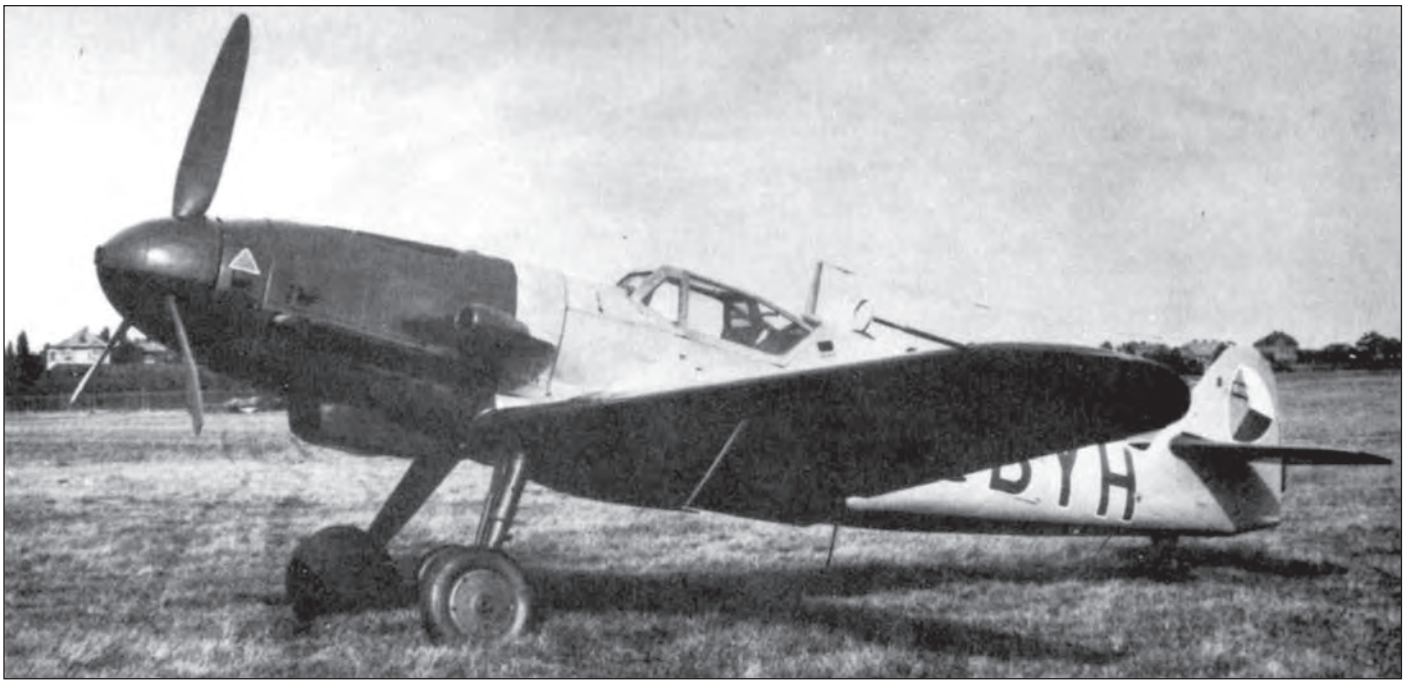
These inherent deficiencies, coupled with excessive manufacturing capacity and other unfavourable aspects, resulted initially in the rapid decline of the Czechoslovak (and after 1993, Slovak) tank industry after 1989, and then to its complete demise at the turn of the century when the production of VT-72C armoured repair and recovery vehicles for India ceased.[9]

FROM MESSERSCHMITTS TO MIGS

Immediately after the end of the Second World War, the Czechoslovak aviation industry continued in the production of the following military aircraft types, the manufacture of which was introduced by the Germans during the war: the Avia C-2 advanced trainer (Arado Ar.96) and Aero C-3 transport and training aircraft (Siebel Si.204 D). This was complemented by overhauled Messerschmitt Bf 109 G/K fighters (under the designation Avia S.99) and, more importantly, by interim (and very inferior) Avia S.199 fighters merging together a Bf 109 G/K airframe with a Jumo 211 engine.

However, thanks to the heritage of the Luftwaffe, Czechoslovakia became the fifth country in the world to be able to operate jet fighters. Overhauls of Messerschmitt Me 262 fighters, which remained on Czechoslovak territory after the defeat of the Third Reich, had begun in the second half of 1945. Under the designation S.92 and CS.92, the aircraft were subsequently introduced into the service of the Czechoslovak Air Force (*Československé letectvo*), which with their use managed to train the first generation of jet fighter pilots. Moreover, the development of the indigenous L-52 jet fighter, which was to use the Rolls-Royce Nene engine of British origin, began in Czechoslovakia in 1947.

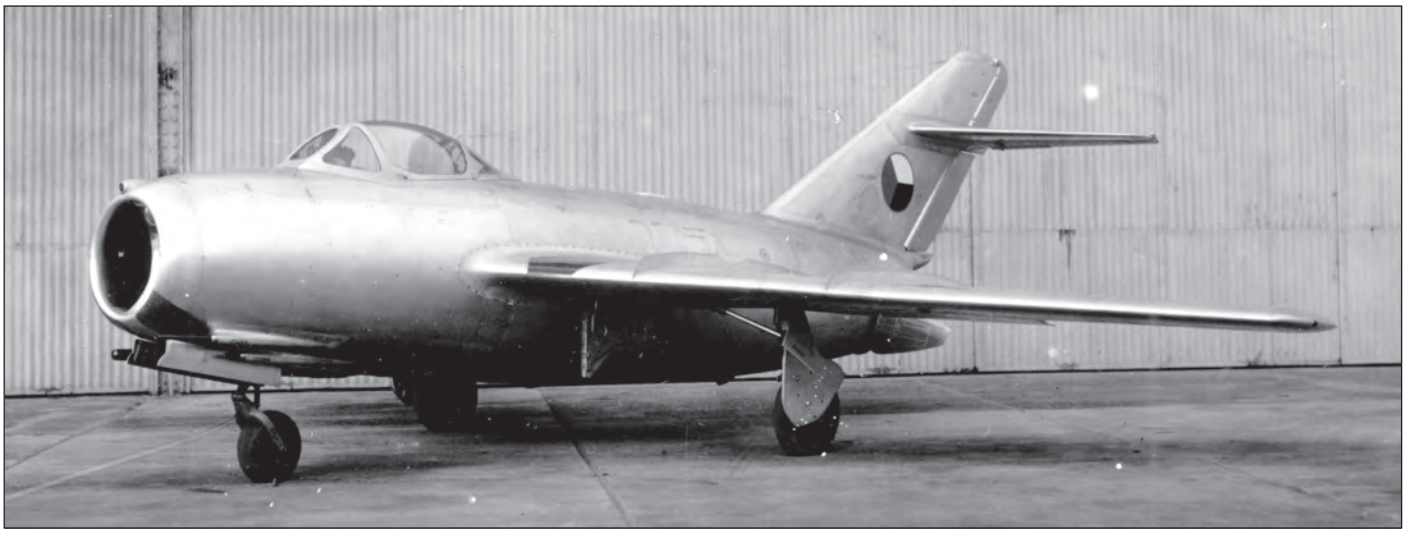
The end of this programme came after 'Victorious February', when the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia came to power in the country. This was followed by an arms embargo of Western states, without whose technical support it was not possible to complete the



After the Second World War, Czechoslovak Avia continued the overhauls of surviving Messerschmitt Bf.109G/K fighters under the designation S.99 (shown in this photograph), and then assembled additional examples equipped with the Jumo 211 engine under the designation S.199. (via Martin Smisek)

Numerous Messerschmitt Me.262 jet fighters left behind after the Second World War were overhauled and introduced to service with the Czechoslovak Air Force under the designations S.92 and CS.92. (via Martin Smisek)

Between 1951 and 1955, the Avia Works manufactured nearly 1,200 B.33 attack aircraft; these were a licenced version of the Soviet-designed Ilyushin Il-10. (via Martin Smisek)



A MiG-15 jet fighter, manufactured in Czechoslovakia by Aero Vodochody and Rudý Letov and operated by the Czechoslovak Air Force under the designation S-102. (via Martin Smisek)

project. Although the Soviet Union had comparable technologies at its disposal, it was not interested in any of its satellite states being able to develop jet fighters on their own. Hence the L-52 project had to be terminated in 1950.

Instead, on 9 May 1949, during negotiations in Moscow, Soviet officials proposed to supply technical documentation for the licence production of Yak-15 jet fighters and Il-10 ground-attack aircraft in Czechoslovakia. At the end of 1949, a sample example of the more modern Yak-17 was delivered, together with the manufacturing documentation, according to which preparations were launched for the start of licence production in Czechoslovakia that was to supply 1,321 aircraft for Soviet Bloc countries.

The United States Air Force's dominance in bombers capable of carrying nuclear bombs apparently forced Moscow to reconsider its existing plans to rearm the air forces of its satellite states with jet fighters. If the communist bloc was to have any hope of success in a possible confrontation, the fighter aviation units of the Central European air forces could not be equipped with an outdated piece of junk. Therefore, in September 1950, Soviet officials decided to provide documentation for the manufacture of Yak-23 fighters in Czechoslovakia. However, even these plans did not last long, as on 17 April 1951, a contract was signed in Moscow for the Czechoslovak licence production of MiG-15 fighters (under the Czechoslovak military designation S-102).

The Czechoslovak aviation industry eventually produced more than 3,400 MiG-15 (S-102) and MiG-15bis (S-103) fighters, together with MiG-15UTI (CS-102) fighter trainers, between 1951 and 1961. The MiGs were initially completed at Rudý Letov in Letňany, and from 1953 at Středočeské strojírny in a newly erected plant, the construction of which commenced one year earlier. Additionally, more than 200 Czechoslovak companies served in the role of subcontractors, including Motorlet Jinonice that manufactured Soviet jet engines under licence. From the late 1950s, Czechoslovakia became the principal producer of MiG-15UTI fighter trainers for the whole Soviet Bloc.

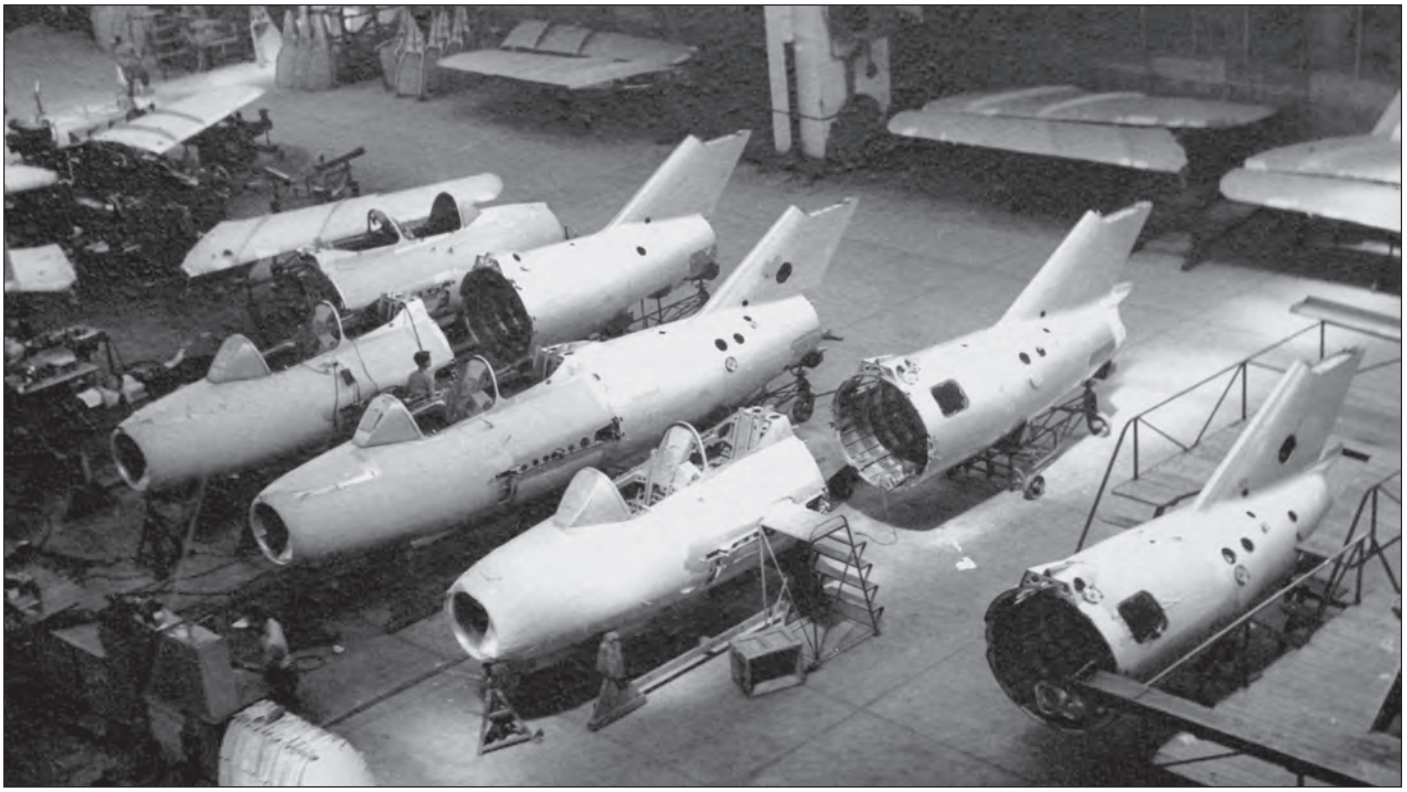
Simultaneously, the licence production of Il-10 ground-attack aircraft (Czechoslovak military designation B-33) commenced at the Avia factory in Letňany near Prague in 1951. Beginning in 1956, the plant switched to the licence manufacture of Il-14 commercial and military personnel and cargo transport aircraft (local designation Av-14). In the meantime, the newly constructed Let aircraft plant at Kunovice carried out the licenced manufacture of Yak-11 trainers under the local designation C-11 between 1953 and 1956.[11]

THE END OF CZECHOSLOVAK-MADE FIGHTERS

However, both the Il-10 and MiG-15 became not only representative of the new era of the Czechoslovak Air Force, but also symbols of an astronomical waste of funds. They were introduced into service during the first half of the 1950s in large numbers. While the former was hopelessly obsolete even before it appeared in the inventory of Czechoslovak ground-attack aviation regiments, the latter managed to become outdated within a few years, to the extent that it was practically unusable for its original purpose. On the other hand, the production of MiG-15s laid the foundations for local manufacture of military jet airplanes, without which the subsequent construction of the indigenous L-29 Delfin jet trainer would not have been possible.

The interest of the Czechoslovak top military and political leadership in the local production of jet fighters persisted, which led to the licence manufacture of 104 MiG-19S aircraft at Středočeské strojírny between 1957 and 1961. Unlike the MiG-15s, these airplanes were delivered to the Czechoslovak Air Force only. The same factory produced 194 MiG-21F-13 fighters between 1963 and 1972, most of which entered service with the Czechoslovak Air Force. Nevertheless, 30 newly manufactured airplanes were delivered to Egypt in 1969. Together with the MiG-21F-13s, Czechoslovakia established licence production of associated R-3S (NATO reporting name AA-2 Atoll) air-to-air missiles at Adamovské strojírny.

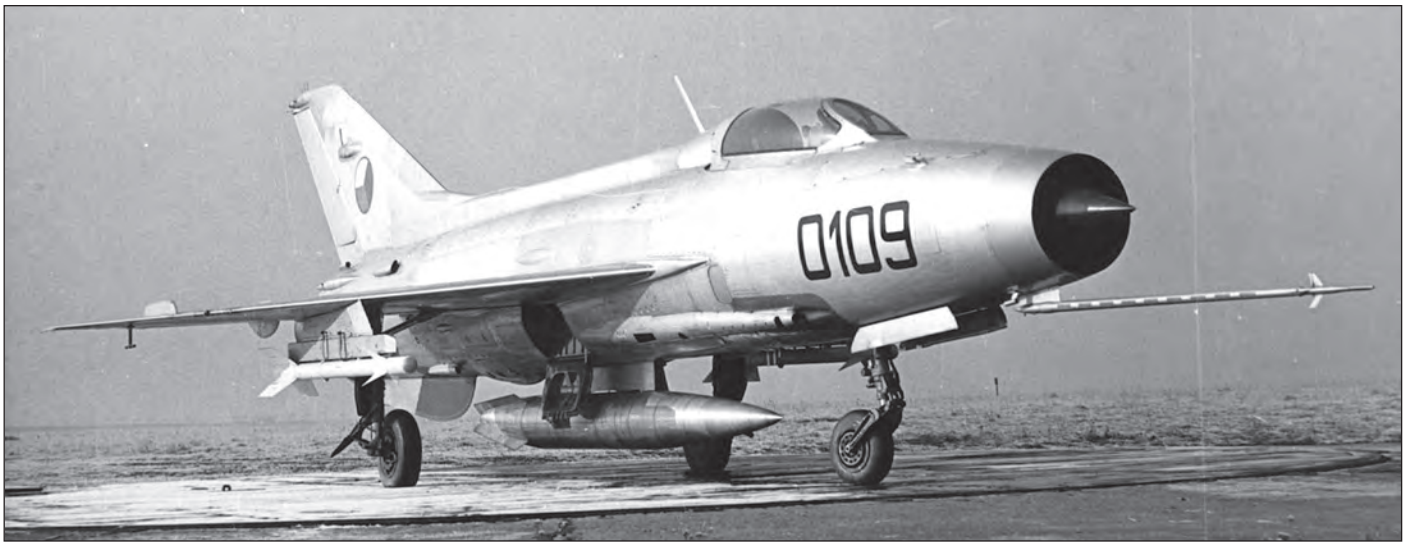
Although Moscow offered Prague a licence production of more-advanced MiG-21PF fighters in August 1962, the prospect of manufacturing modern combat aircraft in Czechoslovakia was



Assembly of MiG-15UTI/CS-102 two-seat conversion trainers at the Středočeské strojírny Works, the contemporary name for Aero Vodochody. (via Martin Smisek)

A Yakovlev Yak-11 trainer, manufactured in Czechoslovakia under the designation C-11. (via Martin Smisek)

A total of 104 MiG-19S were manufactured by Středočeské strojírny between 1957 and 1961. None of these were exported but they saw intensive service with the Czechoslovak Air Force. (via Martin Smisek)



The last combat aircraft ever manufactured in Czechoslovakia was the MiG-21F-13, one of which is seen here while serving with the Czechoslovak Air Force, armed with Soviet-designed but locally-made R-3S infrared homing, air-to-air missiles. Out of 194 Czechoslovak-made MiG-21F-13s, 30 were sold to Egypt in 1969, while 12 were donated to Syria in 1973. (via Martin Smisek)

challenged by several aspects. Primarily, their increasing complexity began to exceed the capabilities of Czechoslovak industry. High investments needed for the introduction of their series production together with low production runs also meant that such an enterprise would be unprofitable. Moreover, licence manufacturing did not ensure the growth of the local research and development base. Therefore, the Presidium ÚV KSČ (*Předsednictvo ÚV KSČ*) decided in March 1966 that aircraft production in Czechoslovakia after 1970 would be constituted by two pillars only, both of which were developed locally: military jet trainers (later the Aero L-39 Albatros) and light transport and passenger airplanes (later the Let L-410 Turbolet). However, both categories of aircraft had a sole main customer – the Soviet Union – that managed to acquire large quantities of them. This proved to be almost fatal after 1989 for both

manufacturers, Aero Vodochody and Let Kunovice, since with the break-up of the Soviet Union the crucial orders evaporated almost overnight.[12]

THE EMPIRE OF JET TRAINERS

The legacy of Czechoslovak jet trainers began in earnest in 1955 when technical and tactical requirements for new advanced military training aircraft (the future Aero L-29 Delfin) were specified. The preliminary project was completed in April 1956 and subsequently submitted to the leadership of the Czechoslovak Air Force. However, after the revision of combat plans, it turned out that the approximately 100 aircraft required for the Czechoslovak Air Force would not be sufficient for cost-effective production. Therefore, it was necessary to find a foreign customer. Consequently, the plans of the aircraft were presented to the Soviet Air Force, which showed interest in the project and made a number of observations, based on which the scheme was reworked into an aircraft designed primarily for basic training, with a secondary role in advanced flight training.

Meanwhile, following a previous analysis, the Standing Committee of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance for Cooperation in the Field of Defence Industry (operating under Soviet dominance) decided to determine specialisations for the production of 89 types of military hardware between 1959 and 1965. Czechoslovakia participated in this scheme with a total of 42 products. In the case of 14 of them, Prague played the role of the sole manufacturer for the whole Warsaw Pact. With the tradition of large-scale manufacturing of MiG-15UTI fighter trainers, it seemed obvious that Czechoslovakia would be selected to become the single manufacturer of the new jet training aircraft. However, to the astonishment of Czechoslovak officials, events began to take a different direction.

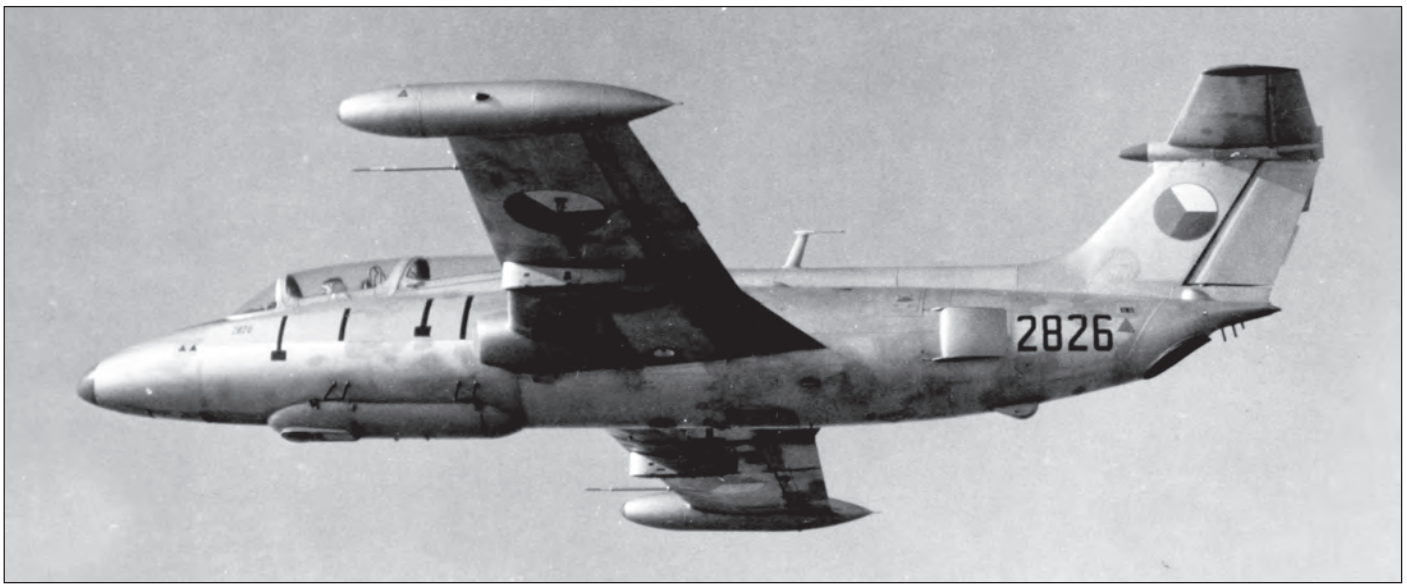
The Soviet Union, instead of making such a decision, began to develop its own type of training aircraft – the Yak-30. Meanwhile, behind the scenes, Poland tried to win the production of a jet training aircraft for itself, either according to its indigenous design (TS-11 Iskra) or under a Soviet licence. In the end, a head-to-head fly-off competition was organised at Monino air base near Moscow during August and September 1961 to evaluate all three competitors and select the winner, which would become the standard jet trainer throughout the Warsaw Pact. A comparison of flight characteristics clearly showed that the Czechoslovak aircraft had the most balanced performance, the best reliability and at the same time was closest to serial production, because it was already equipped with systems for weapons training. Despite the obvious superiority of the L-29 Delfin, Poland chose to continue to pursue the development and procurement of the TS-11 Iskra. However, Moscow accepted the results of the contest and thus all of the other Warsaw Pact countries adopted the Delfin into the inventory of their air forces.

This outcome paved the way for successive massive orders, with the Soviet Air Force alone acquiring a stunning 2,650 Delfins between 1963 and 1974. This position facilitated the successful entry of the aircraft into several countries in the Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia. Moscow's clients, who bought the latest generation of combat aircraft in the Soviet Union, naturally needed a suitable jet trainer. Their choice was very limited, and thus the newly manufactured L-29s were exported to various overseas nations, including Egypt, Syria, Indonesia, Iraq, Nigeria, Uganda and Vietnam.

Due to the high demand, the L-29 Delfin had to be manufactured simultaneously in two factories: Středočeské strojírny at Vodochody and Strojírny první pětiletky (temporary name for Let) at Kunovice. Both plants produced altogether an astounding 3,665 Delfins (1,943 at Vodochody and 1,722 at Kunovice) from 1963–74.

The Delfin's successor, the L-39 Albatros, was developed as the primary jet trainer of the Soviet Air Force from the outset. It became the first training aircraft to be equipped with a turbofan powerplant. Using the same, almost monopoly status within the Warsaw Pact as the L-29, the Albatros enjoyed similar production success, with

Assembly hall for L-29s: the demand for this prolific type was so high that their assembly had to be run at two major works simultaneously. (via Martin Smisek)



An L-29 Delfin in flight. Note the underwing hardpoints which could carry light armament. (via Martin Smisek)

The Aero L-39 Albatros was more than a worthy successor to the L-29 and was operated not only by most of air forces of the Warsaw Pact, but also the majority of customers for Soviet-made fighter aircraft. (via Martin Smisek)

exports to a wide range of countries, initially as a military trainer (L-39C) and later a training and light attack aircraft (L-39ZO and L-39ZA). The Czechoslovak and Soviet Air Forces obtained their first L-39Cs in 1974. Serial manufacturing then continued at Aero Vodochody until March 1997. All L-39s delivered thereafter came from previously produced but not sold airframes. A total of 2,897 L-39 Albatros aircraft of various versions and nine flying prototypes were produced.[13]

ARMS EXPORTS AFTER THE SECOND WORLD WAR

After the end of the Second World War, with the rapid decline of orders from the Czechoslovak Army in mind, the Czechoslovak arms industry wanted to re-establish its position in the markets where it successfully operated before the conflict: the Balkans, Latin America, Middle East and potentially even countries dominated previously by Germany. However, with the surplus stocks of weapons from a recently finished war, this was not an easy task.

One of the most significant deals of the immediate post-war period was represented by the Swiss order from August 1946 for eight G 13 tank destroyers, which was a modification of the Jagdpanzer 38(t) with the StuK 40 gun. The vehicles came from a batch originally intended for the Wehrmacht. This was followed by further orders in November 1946, 1947 and February 1948. Thus, an additional 150 G 13 vehicles including spare parts, manufactured by Škodovy závody, were delivered to Switzerland between 1947 and 1950.

At the dawn of 1948, Czechoslovak arms exports reached a crossroads. Increasing tensions and the growing division of the world into the Eastern and Western Blocs had led to the loss of traditional arms export markets. A serious blow was the cancellation of contracts for the supply of heavy weapons and ammunition to Argentina worth US$13,081,000 upon the intervention of the United States in late 1947. At the same time, many former markets, such as the Balkans, were newly dominated by Moscow, which provided its own armament. Besides, in spring 1947, the overcautious Czechoslovak political leadership asked the Soviet government if it had any objections to the production and export of weapons to foreign countries. The positive Soviet reply arrived on 7 June that year, the only exception mentioned by Moscow being 'political obstacles', such as fascist Spain or areas where an armed insurgency was taking place. Therefore, the only area left for larger arms export from Czechoslovakia became the Middle East.[14]

These developments were taking place at a time when tensions in the Middle East were skyrocketing, ultimately leading to the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. Following the consideration of multiple aspects – including potential economic benefits, the political outlooks and

Soviet interests – Prague decided to deliver armaments to the newly emerged state of Israel despite the international arms embargo. Soldiers of the Israel Defense Forces were also trained directly in Czechoslovakia. Largely thanks to this military assistance, Israel was able to defend its existence. Despite the Czechoslovak communist coup d'état in February 1948, the military shipments – mostly composed of pistols, rifles, machine guns, associated ammunition, artillery optical instruments and spare parts – continued to flow to such countries as Bolivia, Peru, Venezuela, Ethiopia and India. Among the largest arms deals of the late 1940s were the above-mentioned deliveries of G 13 tank destroyers for Switzerland and shipments of 20 AH-IV-Hb tankettes for Ethiopia in 1949 and 1950. The contract for Ethiopian vehicles to the overall value of US$535,000 was signed on 24 June 1948. During the same month, Czechoslovak company Považské strojárne and the Ethiopian government struck a deal for the establishment of an ammunition factory that was constructed in 1949.[15]

During the first half of the 1950s, most of the exported armaments manufactured in Czechoslovakia were delivered to the Soviet Bloc countries and used for the rapid rearming of their armies in line with Stalin's anticipation of an impending global conflict. Moreover, within Operation Y, Czechoslovakia delivered 100 million rounds of 7.92mm ammunition (apparently in 1952 and 1953) for the Chinese People's Volunteer Army fighting United Nations forces in the Korean War.[16]

Thus, arms exports to non-communist states (except for sports and hunting weapons) had virtually stopped in the early 1950s. In April 1953, the export of all weapons to all non-communist countries was banned completely. Exceptions to this ban were issued in the following years. Later, several efforts were made to address the issue of Czechoslovak arms exports more comprehensively.

CZECHOSLOVAK POST-WAR ARMS TRADING

Immediately after the Second World War, Czechoslovak arms trading followed roughly the procedures established before the outbreak of the conflict by the State Defence Act 131/1936 Sb. from 13 May 1936. According to its statutes, the export and import of weapons, their components, explosives, ammunition and other items of military hardware was allowed only with the permission of the Ministry of National Defence. In special cases and at the request of the Ministry of National Defence, export and import of other kinds of military hardware, raw materials and semi-finished products necessary for the manufacture, repair or maintenance of weapons could be allowed, but only with the permission of the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Small Businesses (*Ministerstvo průmyslu, obchodu a živností*) in agreement with the Ministry of National Defence and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (*Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí*).[17]

Upon the 'Victorious February' takeover, the leaders of the new communist regime gained the right to decide on arms exports. On 11 March 1948, communist Prime Minister Klement Gottwald, together with two high-ranking officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, agreed to ban weapon deliveries to Turkey, Iran, Greece, China and Spain. Deliveries to other countries could only take place with the approval of the Ministry of National Defence, and on the condition that the customer was the government of the respective state and that the concluded contract would contain an obligation that the delivered weapons would not be re-exported. During the same year, the ÚV KSČ established a special committee composed of the prime minister, minister of foreign affairs, minister of foreign

Ruzyně Airport: entry point to Czechoslovakia for foreign military delegations, as seen in the 1970s. (VÚA-VHA Praha)

Lobby of the Arrival Hall for foreign military delegations. (via Martin Smisek)

trade and general secretary of the KSČ that decided on arms exports in serious and questionable cases.[18]

After the consolidation of the communists in power, the whole procedure of arms exports to non-communist states became extremely complicated and bureaucratic. The exporter first had to discuss the demand of a foreign customer with the production company. He then submitted it to the Ministry of National Defence to see if the export would affect supplies to the Czechoslovak Army. The whole matter was then assessed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. If its decision was positive, the Ministry of National Defence allowed the exporter to submit a specific bid to the foreign customer. After the exporter and the customer had clarified the contract, the whole matter was reassessed by the Ministry of National Defence and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In the case of a positive opinion of both institutions, the issue was passed on to the Political Secretariat ÚV KSČ. If approved, the exporter had to obtain an export permit from the Ministry of Foreign Trade (*Ministerstvo zahraničního obchodu*), which required an export clause, which was again issued by the Ministry of National Defence.

The unsustainability of this convoluted procedure led to changes that were approved by the Political Secretariat ÚV KSČ on 19 March 1952. According to the new process, the Technical Department (*Technické oddělení*) of the Ministry of Foreign Trade collected all inquiries from abroad. After discussions with the production plants, the Technical Department turned to the Ministry of National Defence to determine whether the export would jeopardise supplies to the Czechoslovak Army, or whether the weapons could be supplied from the Army's surplus stocks. If the Ministry of National Defence had no reservations, the matter was referred to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In the case of its consent, the prospective arms export was submitted to the Political Secretariat ÚV KSČ for final approval.[19]

THE RENAISSANCE OF CZECHOSLOVAK ARMS EXPORTS

Based on the resolution of the Political Secretariat ÚV KSČ from 22 April 1953, all exports of arms, ammunition, military equipment and other special materiel were banned to all non-communist countries. One of the reasons for this step was 'shortcomings found in the export of sports weapons in the Závody Jana Švermy in Brno' where it was possible to illegally export regular infantry arms from Czechoslovakia as sports weapons due to insufficient record keeping. In addition, communist officials stated that the 'hunting rifles, small-calibre rifles, and pistols sent to capitalist states armed the authorities of those states to suppress the workers' movements and the movements of the oppressed colonial nations.'

Therefore, the ban also applied to the supply of sports and hunting weapons, related ammunition, sports aircraft and spare parts. However, this strict ban not only brought serious problems in international trade relations, but as a result, Prague was losing the influx of much-needed hard currency. Moreover, the Czechoslovak warehouses were full of sports and hunting weapons and ammunition to the overall value of 96,566,000 CSK, and the demand for them within Czechoslovakia and other Soviet Bloc countries was almost non-existent. For this reason, the minister of foreign trade presented a proposal for exemptions for sports, training and passenger airplanes, aircraft engines, spare parts, hunting and sports weapons and related ammunition. However, this proposal was rejected by the Political Secretariat ÚV KSČ on 19 October 1953. Nevertheless, the export of these goods was authorised by a resolution of the Czechoslovak government from 9 February 1954, which was confirmed by a decision of the Political Secretariat ÚV KSČ on 19 July that year.[20]

However, already during the same year, the first exemptions from the arms export ban had been issued on a case-by-case basis. In this context, starting from 1954, a system of cover numbers (so-called operations) was created by the Ministry of National Defence for individual non-communist countries that showed interest in weapons from Czechoslovakia. The number range started with 100, and consecutive numbers (see Table 3) were assigned gradually immediately after the establishment of serious negotiations with the respective country, regardless of whether the arms deliveries actually took place. The cover numbers were used in written documentation and in the course of different negotiations to keep the actual recipient of Czechoslovak arms unknown for the potentially unauthorised personnel. For the same reason, the weapons and other military hardware were labelled 'special material' or simply 'special' in related documentation. Of course, all internal documents related to Czechoslovak arms exports were classified as secret or top secret, and all involved persons needed proper clearance.[21]

TABLE 3: OPERATIONS – KNOWN COVER DESIGNATIONS OF NON-COMMUNIST COUNTRIES, 1954–71[22]

OPERATION (AKCE)	COUNTRY
100/1	Guatemala
101	Afghanistan
102	India
103	Indonesia
104	Syria
105	Egypt (United Arab Republic)
105C	'Morocco' (in fact Algerian FLN – National Liberation Front)
106	Ecuador
107	Burma
108	Sweden
109	Sudan
110	Yemen (Mutawakkilite Kingdom of Yemen/ Yemen Arab Republic)
111	Switzerland
112	Austria
113	Jordan
114	Finland
115	Yugoslavia
116	Argentina
117	Guinea
118	Iraq (Kurdistan)
119	Tunisia
120	Lebanon
121	Ceylon
122	Cuba
123	West Germany
124	France

125	Iran
126	Cambodia
127	Congo
128	Ethiopia
129	Mali
130	Algeria
131	Denmark
132	Ghana
133	Angola (MPLA – People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola)
134	Unknown
135	Somalia
136	Portuguese Guinea (PAIGC – African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde)
137	Kenya
138	Unknown
139	Laos
140	Unknown
141	South Africa (South African Communist Party)
142	Uganda
143	Unknown
144	Cyprus
199	Morocco

The very first country to receive export permission was Guatemala in 1954. Guatemalan President Jacobo Árbenz had challenged the highly profitable business of the United Fruit Company, based on exploitative labour practices. The company's representatives then lobbied to persuade the United States government to overthrow the Árbenz government. Sensing the imminent danger, Guatemala wanted to obtain new weapons for its protection. However, the United States had stopped selling arms to Guatemala in 1951, and two years later thwarted several Guatemalan arms purchases. Desperate for weapons, Guatemalan officials secretly approached their former supplier of weapons from before the Second World War – Czechoslovakia. Upon receiving consent from Moscow, Prague delivered infantry weapons and artillery armament, all captured Wehrmacht arms from the war, including related ammunition, that enabled Árbenz to equip an army of some 12,000 troops. It was the first time that any Soviet Bloc country had shipped weapons to the western hemisphere. Consequently, this action was seen in Washington as the establishment of a communist beachhead in the Americas, which was the final straw that prompted the CIA to launch its coup – Operation PBSUCCESS.[23]

Summer 1954 was a busy period for the Politburo ÚV KSČ (*Politické byro*, successor designation for the Political Secretariat ÚV KSČ) that approved, with Soviet blessing, additional exceptions in the shipment of armaments abroad. Permission for deliveries of ammunition and anti-aircraft machine guns to Afghanistan and spare parts for Ethiopian tanks was given during July. In August, the communist leadership in Prague allowed the export of spare parts for production machinery in an Ethiopian ammunition plant. Additional demands from Third World states followed, and thus Politburo ÚV KSČ authorised the export of 7.65mm pistols to Egypt and Mexico in February 1955 and, in June, the delivery of 45 PzKpfw IV tanks and 12 StuG III assault guns to Syria. Several months later, in September 1955, the massive Czechoslovak-Egyptian arms deal was struck. Additional huge contracts for weapons were signed with Egypt and Syria during the next year. Naturally, all these were with Moscow's permission, and in the case of Egypt, with direct Soviet involvement hidden behind Czechoslovak camouflage.[24]

WEAPONS (ALMOST) FOR EVERYBODY

The Politburo ÚV KSČ was forced to address the issue of arms exports to non-communist countries in a comprehensive form in late 1954 and early 1955 when it became clear that such exports to Soviet Bloc countries would stagnate due to their payment difficulties. Indeed, in 1954 Bulgaria refused to take over the ordered military hardware, and Hungary and Poland ordered no new arms from Czechoslovakia because of a lack of financial resources. At the same time, Czechoslovakia had extensive manufacturing capacity for the production of weapons, which needed to be utilised.

Additionally, on 20 December 1954, the Politburo ÚV KSČ ordered the Ministry of Foreign Trade to create a financial reserve in hard currency to the value of 150 million CSK. Moreover, from 22 April 1953, when the ban on the export of weapons from Czechoslovakia to non-communist states was issued, the Ministry of Foreign Trade registered requests from 17 Third World countries for the supply of armaments to the overall value of 1.483 billion CSK. These events brought Czechoslovak officials to the realisation that the delivery of armaments to Third World states – or according to the contemporary Czechoslovak term, 'economically underdeveloped countries' – could be an advantageous way to obtain much-needed hard currency. Hence, the Politburo ÚV KSČ approved the selling of arms to 'economically underdeveloped countries' in its resolution of 20 January 1955 to create a financial reserve in foreign exchange currencies.[25]

On 22 August 1955, new guidelines for the export of armaments from Czechoslovakia were approved by the Politburo ÚV KSČ, with the weapons divided into two categories. The first group included any armament that was not used by the Czechoslovak People's Army, and at the same time, it was unlikely that it could be used by non-communist armies. In principle, these were sporting and hunting weapons, which could be supplied without the special permission of the Politburo ÚV KSČ. The second group included any armament either introduced in the Czechoslovak armed forces or one that could be used in the inventory of Third World countries, and their export had to be approved by the Politburo ÚV KSČ.[26]

However, less than a year later, on 4 June 1956, the Politburo ÚV KSČ authorised brand new overall guidelines for the delivery of armaments to non-communist countries. The reason was simple – Czechoslovakia became in the meantime an important arms supplier for Third World states. A number of countries from the Middle East, Southeast Asia, Latin America and Europe turned – officially and unofficially – to Czechoslovakia with requests for the supply of military hardware. Some of the requests were considered by Czechoslovak authorities as provocations to manoeuvre Czechoslovakia into a situation in which it could be accused of trying 'to incite strife, provoke bloodshed and exacerbate tensions in relations between states'.

Prague consulted Moscow on the whole matter and, on the basis of an *aide-mémoire* handed over by Soviet ambassador Grishin to Czechoslovak Prime Minister Viliam Široký, Czechoslovak officials drafted a new directive banning arms exports to countries grouped in NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization), SEATO (Southeast Asia Treaty Organization), the Baghdad Pact and the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance (expressly named

Afghan Army Works constructed by Czechoslovakia in 1960s and 1970s. (US Department of Defense)

were Uruguay, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela). In the Middle East and Asia, Czechoslovak weapons could be delivered to Egypt, Syria, Yemen, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, India, Burma, Indonesia and Ceylon.

In the case of Ethiopia, each request had to be examined individually in light of the situation and the nature of the arms to be supplied. The Ministry of Foreign Trade was to 'positively' receive requests for arms supplies from the neutral European countries of Austria, Switzerland and Sweden. In the case of a larger delivery or a supply of 'a more serious nature', the minister of foreign trade was to submit a proposal to the Politburo ÚV KSČ with the consent of the minister of foreign affairs and the minister of national defence. The guidelines also approved the export of military hardware to Finland.

Furthermore, the resolution from 4 June decided that:

> In the event of demand from other countries or in cases of particularly serious, complex or controversial issues, the minister of foreign trade will immediately inform the prime minister without responding to the request and either decide to suspend negotiations or submit, in agreement with the minister of foreign affairs and the minister of national defence, the relevant proposal to the Politburo. In such cases, the prime minister will inform the Soviet government.[27]

THE UPDATING OF ARMS EXPORT GUIDELINES

The next slight update of the regulations for delivery of armaments from Czechoslovakia to the Third World came on 25 October 1960, when the Politburo ÚV KSČ approved new guidelines for the export of special materiel (simultaneously, former resolutions from 22 August 1955 and 4 June 1956 were cancelled). Like before, Moscow was consulted over the whole matter beforehand. After a Czechoslovak *aide-mémoire* from 17 May 1960, the Soviet ambassador in Czechoslovakia, Zimyanin, handed over an approving reply to Czechoslovak Prime Minister Široký on 16 June of the same year. However, the Soviets had two objections. Firstly, Moscow considered it pointless for Czechoslovakia to offer Soviet military hardware that it could not supply from its own stockpiles. Furthermore, Soviet officials did not agree with the provision that the supply of equipment for the production of sports and hunting weapons and the delivery of certain types of logistical and medical equipment and explosives should be considered as a standard export.

Compared to the original directive, the list of countries to which weapons could be supplied had been changed. Thus, weapons from Czechoslovakia could now be delivered to Iraq, Morocco, Tunisia, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Sudan, Ethiopia, Cambodia, Bolivia, Cuba and Venezuela. On the other hand, some previously approved states were omitted, namely Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and Burma.

Updated guidelines characterised the term 'special materiel' as follows:

> The term special materiel (special equipment) must be understood as all materiel introduced into the armament and equipment of the Czechoslovak army or allied armies unless it is normally also supplied to the civilian sector. It also includes industrial works, single-purpose machines, and equipment used exclusively for the production of military weapons and ammunition or means of increasing the country's military potential. This does not include machinery and equipment for the production of sports (hunting) weapons and ammunition. In disputed cases, the opinion of the Ministry of National Defence is decisive.

Under the new guidelines, the Ministry of Foreign Trade could offer and demonstrate to approved countries captured German weapons from the Second World War and Czechoslovak or Soviet military hardware that had previously been exported to one of the non-communist countries (and had thus lost the character of classified materiel). After specifying the requirements with the client, the Ministry of Foreign Trade was to inform the representative of the State Committee of the Council of Ministers of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics for Foreign Economic Relations in Czechoslovakia, and ask the Soviet authorities for their stance on the potential export of arms. In the case of non-approved countries, it was necessary to obtain the consent of the Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of National Defence and then to consult with Moscow on the matter before displaying or offering the requested materiel to the customer. In the case of Soviet consent, the Politburo ÚV KSČ had the final say in approving or disapproving of the delivery.[28]

The next change in the guidelines came on 13 August 1963, when the Presidium ÚV KSČ (successor of the Politburo ÚV KSČ) approved the sale of all obsolete Mauser rifles (some 40,000 7.92mm rifles of the types vz. 24, vz. 33, vz. 33/40 and vz. 98 N[29]) stored in the warehouses of the Czechoslovak People's Army to private foreign trade companies from certain NATO countries. Each individual sale was discussed in advance by representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Trade, the Ministry of National Defence and the Ministry of the Interior (*Ministerstvo vnitra*). The deals were carried out under the disguise of the OMNIPOL foreign trading company and on the condition that the weapons would not be delivered to the Republic of South Africa or other territories recommended by the Ministry

of Foreign Affairs (such as the Portuguese colonies in Sub-Saharan Africa).

Czechoslovak officials were swift to congratulate themselves that the supply of these weapons with their respective ammunition would generate hard currency equivalent to 2.8 million CSK in a very short time. However, what they apparently did not know or expect was that some of this special materiel could end up in hands which were hostile to Prague's allies. This would probably be the case with the Yemen Arab Republic led by Abdullah al-Sallal, the rule of whom was challenged by royalist rebels during the North Yemen Civil War (1962–70), since, in the frame of a covert British operation financed by Saudi Arabia, the opposition tribes siding with former Imam Muhammad al-Badr were supplied with arms and ammunition of East European origin.[30]

After the Second World War, the German-designed MG 34 light machine gun was manufactured in Czechoslovakia under the designation vz. 34 N. (VÚA-VHA Praha)

The list of non-aligned and neutral countries permitted to obtain armaments from Czechoslovakia had been extended to include Lebanon, Burma and Mexico, thanks to a resolution of the Politburo ÚV KSČ from 20 August 1963. Naturally, this issue still needed Soviet approval.[31]

SMALL ARMS OLD AND NEW FOR THE NON-COMMUNIST STATES

Further extensions and modifications of directives for the export of special materiel were carried out on the basis of a resolution of the Presidium ÚV KSČ from 28 April 1964. Arms from Czechoslovakia could then be newly delivered to Somalia, Kenya, Jordan, Libya and (under certain conditions) Saudi Arabia. At the same time, the Presidium approved the sale of all remaining Mauser rifles, since the People's Militia – the militia organisation of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia – had at its disposal 40,150 vz. 24 and vz. 98 N rifles. Surplus and outdated vz. 52 rifles could also now be exported in the same way as the Mauser weapons. Another change related to the activities of the Presidium ÚV KSČ, which no longer approved all arms exports to non-communist countries, but only to those that made purchases with the use of credit or wanted to buy military hardware from Czechoslovakia for the first time. The latter case, for which the Presidium ÚV KSČ had to provide its approval, involved the export of new types of weapons. In other cases, the minister of foreign trade was authorised to conclude contracts without the prior permission of the Presidium.[32]

On 21 July 1964, the Presidium ÚV KSČ approved a proposal for the export of military hardware to all countries of the League of Arab States with the same range of products as for the United Arab Republic (a political union between Egypt and Syria that existed between 1958 and 1961, thereafter the official name of Egypt until 1971).[33]

Meanwhile, the export of Mauser rifles from Czechoslovakia was generally successful. In addition, private arms trading companies from non-communist countries began to demand other, especially

TABLE 4: SMALL ARMS AUTHORISED FOR EXPORT INTO NON-COMMUNIST COUNTRIES ACCORDING TO A RESOLUTION OF THE PRESIDIUM ÚV KSČ FROM 23 FEBRUARY 1965[35]

TYPE	NOTE
CAPTURED WEAPONS	
Radom, 9mm pistol	Czechoslovak designation of Polish VIS wz. 35 (German designation P 35 (p)), through re-export from Poland
vz. 43 N, 7.92mm rifle	Czechoslovak designation of German Gewehr 43
vz. 34 N, 7.92mm machine gun	Czechoslovak designation of German MG 34
vz. 42 N, 7.92mm machine gun	Czechoslovak designation of German MG 42, through re-export from East Germany
vz. 44 N, 7.92mm assault rifle	Czechoslovak designation of German Sturmgewehr 44, through re-export from East Germany
CZECHOSLOVAK WEAPONS MANUFACTURED BEFORE SECOND WORLD WAR	
vz. 26, 7.92mm light machine gun	
vz. 37, 7.92mm heavy machine gun	
CZECHOSLOVAK WEAPONS MANUFACTURED AFTER SECOND WORLD WAR	
Sa 23/Sa 25, 9mm submachine gun	
vz. 52, 7.62mm machine gun	
vz. 58, 7.62mm assault rifle	
vz. 59, 7.62mm machine gun	
vz. 61, 7.65mm submachine gun	including the 9mm subvariant

The widely used Mauser Karabiner 98k prompted the Czechoslovaks to develop the shorter and more compact vz. 16/33 in the 1930s, which in 1940 was adapted for service with mountain troops of the Wehrmacht as the Gewehr 33/40. In turn, after the war, the Czechoslovaks adopted the original for service with their armed forces under the designation vz. 98 N, an example of which is shown here (with bayonet attached). (VÚA-VHA Praha)

automatic, types of weapons. Simultaneously, the Czechoslovak People's Army still had sizeable stocks of older small arms in its warehouses, which could be sold rather than gradually scrapped. Therefore, on 23 February 1965, the Presidium ÚV KSČ decided to further expand the range of infantry weapons, including ammunition, for export to non-communist states. At the same time, a decision was made to supply private companies from the West not only with captured German and obsolete Czechoslovak weapons, but also with current Czechoslovak assault rifles (vz. 58), machine guns (vz. 59) and submachine guns (vz. 61). The proposition appeared so lucrative that the Ministry of Foreign Trade was ready to obtain some of the foreign small arms through re-export from Poland and East Germany. The list of small arms authorised for the export is listed in Table 4.[34]

THE 1966 UPDATE

The next major change in the arms export guidelines followed a resolution of the Presidium ÚV KSČ from 14 June 1966.

Again, the list of non-communist states that could buy Czechoslovak weapons was expanded with several new applicants. The Ministry of Foreign Trade could now offer and supply armaments to the following countries: Afghanistan, Algeria, Austria, Cambodia, Ceylon, Chile, Congo (Brazzaville), Cyprus, Ethiopia, Finland, Ghana, Guinea, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Mexico, Morocco, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, Syria, Tanzania, Tunisia, Uganda, United Arab Republic, Yemen and Zambia.

Arms export guidelines also began to apply to military assistance which preceded or followed the supply of military hardware. The updated definition of the term 'special materiel' was as follows:

> The term special materiel (special equipment) means military equipment introduced into the armament of the Czechoslovak People's Army, as well as industrial works, single-purpose machines and equipment used exclusively for the production of military weapons and ammunition.
>
> This does not include equipment and materiel used both in the Czechoslovak People's Army and in the civilian sector, as well as machinery and equipment for the production of sports (hunting) weapons and ammunition and industrial explosives and fuzing devices for them.
>
> In unclear cases, the Ministry of Foreign Trade consults the character of the materiel with the Ministry of National Defence, which decides on the character of the materiel.
>
> These directives also apply to the provision of technical assistance which precedes or follows the supply of special equipment.

In order to make exports from Czechoslovakia more flexible, the guidelines contained a complete list of Czechoslovak armament and other military hardware, with three explicitly stated availability statuses for their export: export allowed for selected non-communist countries – those mentioned above; export allowed for all countries; and export allowed for private foreign trading companies. At the same time, it was decided that – under certain conditions – Czechoslovak military hardware such as L-29 Delfin training airplanes, OT-62 and OT-64 armoured personnel carriers (APCs), Tatra 813 tractor trucks and DOK wheeled engineer vehicles could be newly delivered to all Third World and neutral countries.

The resolution reapproved the use of Czechoslovak cargo ships for the transport of military hardware overseas. This practice was applied until a major international scandal in April 1959, when the Czechoslovak merchant ship *Lidice*, smuggling arms for Algerian rebels, was intercepted by two French Navy frigates near Casablanca. The freight of Czechoslovak infantry weapons was promptly confiscated by French authorities. Thereafter, on 28 April 1959, the Politburo ÚV KSČ banned the use of Czechoslovak vessels for the transport of Czechoslovak arms. Subsequently, Polish and Soviet ships (or alternatively ships from non-communist states if the nature of the cargo made it possible) were used instead. However, this solution was more expensive and, if a Soviet ship was to be used, more time-consuming since Soviet ports were more distant and there were problems associated with different track gauge between Czechoslovak and Soviet railroads.

Another change in the guidelines concerned visits of senior military, police and security officials from non-communist countries in Czechoslovakia. The minister of national defence and minister of the interior could receive these representatives with the prior consent of only the minister of foreign trade and minister of foreign affairs, without the approval of the Presidium ÚV KSČ, if these visits were held to 'develop foreign trade and technical assistance in the special area'.[36]

CHANGING OF RESPONSIBILITIES

The last important organisational change came in 1968, when the main authority and responsibility for management and decision making in matters of export of military hardware (together with the provision of military assistance) was delegated to the Czechoslovak government. On 24 October that year, the Czechoslovak government approved Resolution No. 374, which ordered the minister of foreign trade, 'together with the ministers of foreign affairs, heavy industry, national defence, economic planning and the interior, to look for ways how to further economically use the export of special materiel as highly efficient engineering goods'.

At the same time, a new version of arms export guidelines entered into force. Increasing demands for newly manufactured Czechoslovak arms, together with customers' requests for high flexibility and swiftness of deliveries, needed a more complex approach. Thus, additional Czechoslovak state institutions became an integral part of arms exports, as stated in the newly approved guidelines: 'The trade with special materiel is organised and managed by the minister of foreign trade; in performing this function, he coordinates the trade with the ministers of foreign affairs, national defence, interior, finance and economic planning, and, as appropriate, with the heads of other central bodies, taking into account foreign policy, defence and economic considerations.'

The new guidelines made the definition of the term 'special materiel' more precise:

1 The term special materiel means:
   a) products and spare parts to them, which by special design and arrangement are intended for the purposes of defence and security of the state and for mass and exclusive use in the armed forces, technical assistance, licences for the production of special materiel and special patents;
   b) single-purpose machines and equipment, used mainly in the production of products according to point a).
2. The following shall not be considered as special materiel:
   a) products which, while serving the purposes of national security, are usable in the civil sector or have been adapted for use in the civil sector;
   b) sports and hunting weapons, pistols and revolvers for personal defence, including ammunition and machinery and machinery equipment for their production;
   […]
3) In disputable cases, the Ministry of Foreign Trade shall consult the Ministry of National Defence or the Ministry of the Interior on the nature of the materiel.

With additional slight changes, the guidelines contained an updated list of non-communist countries of the Third World and neutral states with the right to obtain armaments from Czechoslovakia: Afghanistan, Algeria, Austria, Bolivia, Brazil, Burma, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Ceylon, Chad, Chile, Congo (Brazzaville), Congo (Kinshasa), Costa Rica, Cuba, Dahomey, India, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Mexico, Morocco, Paraguay, Peru, Qatar, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, South Yemen, Sweden, Switzerland, Syria, Tanzania, Tunisia, Uganda, the United Arab Republic, Upper Volta, Uruguay, Venezuela, Yemen and Zambia.

However, unlike previous versions of the arms export guidelines, this edition expressly named states and territories in the Third World that were not allowed to buy Czechoslovak weapons: 'All of Central America except for Costa Rica, all of the Caribbean except for Bolivia, Cuba, Paraguay and Venezuela, Israel, the South African Republic, the Korean Republic, Laos, Thailand, the Republic of Vietnam, Angola, Southwest Africa, Rhodesia and Mozambique.'[37]

HTS: THE CZECHOSLOVAK MONOPOLY ARMS MERCHANT

Extensive nationalisation was carried out in Czechoslovakia on the basis of decrees of the President of the Republic just months after the end of the Second World War, in October 1945. In addition to the confiscation of ethnic German property, there was an extensive and one-time nationalisation (confiscation) of mines, large industrial enterprises (those with over 500 employees), food industry companies, banks and private insurance companies. After the communist coup in February 1948, the process of nationalisation in Czechoslovakia continued with the transition of private property to social ownership of the totalitarian state. Like any other economic activity, foreign trading was also hit by the wave of nationalisation.

The import and export of goods became a state-controlled monopoly in the hands of the newly established Ministry of Foreign Trade. The ministry managed several so-called specialised privileged companies, each of which specialised in the foreign trading of several specific types of products. After the completion of the nationalisation and organisation of foreign trade, as of 1 February 1949, there were a total of 20 privileged foreign trade companies. Over time, the communist government managed to establish some 30 foreign trade organisations, of which 17 were foreign trade companies for the import and export of goods.

One of them was OMNIPOL which was originally established by Škodovy závody in October 1934 as a foreign trading subsidiary for barter transactions. Between 1935 and 1938, an extensive foreign network of OMNIPOL's sales offices was built in more than 60 countries on all continents. Through these representations, various commodities of the rapidly developing Czechoslovak economy gradually began to be traded. OMNIPOL survived the Second World War and was later integrated into the structure of the Ministry of Foreign Trade.[38]

The increasing scope of Czechoslovak arms export and import during 1951 highlighted problems the Ministry of Foreign Trade had with maintaining the secrecy of military hardware deliveries. For this reason and according to the established Soviet practice, on 19 October 1951, the Political Secretariat ÚV KSČ ordered the Ministry of Foreign Trade to establish within its ranks a separate and highly secretive Technical Department (*Technické oddělení*), staffed with officers of the Czechoslovak Army and responsible for organising the import and export of armaments. The exact competences of the Technical Department were specified in a resolution of the Political Secretariat ÚV KSČ from 12 December 1951: all exports and imports of military hardware, including components, semi-finished products, ammunition and machines for arms production, industrial works for arms production and the organising of technical assistance in the military field (at that time primarily related to the introduction of licenced arms production from the Soviet Union). In 1954, the Technical Department was expanded and renamed the Main Technical Administration (*Hlavní technická správa*, HTS).

The official status of the HTS, approved by the Politburo ÚV KSČ on 13 February 1956, described this institution as an independent economic organisation of the Ministry of Foreign Trade, the mission of which was:

Building with original offices of the HTS and OMNIPOL, in Prague. (Photo by Martin Smisek)

Modern-day building housing the OMNIPOL since 1979. (Photo by Martin Smisek)

a) Through the import and export of military hardware, industrial works for the establishment of arms factories, and the implementation of scientific-technical cooperation to help as economically as possible to increase the defence capabilities of the Czechoslovak Republic and the countries of the socialism camp.
b) Export of military hardware and industrial works for the production of this equipment to other states, especially economically less developed, in the spirit of the principles of Czechoslovak peaceful foreign policy, while ensuring the economic tasks of the Ministry of Foreign Trade.

The HTS also operated the foreign trading company Omnia for the import and export of fissile materiel, nuclear equipment and associated devices (the primary assignment of Omnia at that time was the export of Czechoslovak uranium to the Soviet Union). The foreign trading company OMNIPOL was incorporated into the ranks of the HTS, with the primary task (defined in April 1955) of realisation of the export of sports weapons (formerly organised by the foreign trading company KOVO) and civilian aircraft (formerly run by the foreign trading company Motokov). The director of OMNIPOL was usually simultaneously deputy director of the HTS. Moreover, OMNIPOL played another important role, serving as the HTS front company in the sale of weapons through arms dealers and in all cases where there were concerns about the possible discrediting of the Czechoslovak state. In such a case, communist officials could make excuses and blame 'some company' in the event of a potential scandal, although it was the top communist and state leadership that decided on every arms export from Czechoslovakia throughout the Cold War.[39]

REORGANISATION OF THE HTS

Scandal indeed came quite early on when, in April 1959, the French authorities confiscated weapons for Algerian insurgents that were smuggled on board the Czechoslovak cargo ship *Lidice*. In the face of international anger, the Politburo ÚV KSČ ordered a thorough review of the activities of the HTS on 28 April 1959. From its establishment until 1959, the HTS exported special materiel to an overall value of 4.9 billion CSK, while imports amounted to 2.7 billion CSK. The main purchaser was the Soviet Union, followed by Romania, Bulgaria, Poland, East Germany, the People's Republic of China, Hungary and Albania. Importing was carried out mainly from the Soviet Union, while later Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria and East Germany became suppliers for Czechoslovakia. In the frame of scientific and technical cooperation from 1952–59, the HTS imported licence documentation worth approximately 87.5 million CSK for the introduction of local production of Soviet types of weapons. At the same time, it sent 1,459 Czechoslovak experts for technical consultations and study practice abroad and secured the activities of 1,119 foreign experts in Czechoslovak plants, either as advisors (mostly Soviets) or participants in study practice.

Concerning the export of special materiel to Third World countries, until the end of 1959, the HTS exported military hardware and industrial works for arms production to the overall value of 1.75 billion CSK, of which approximately 60 percent was from new production and 40 pecent from the inventory of the Ministry

of National Defence. In addition, the HTS arranged the export of military hardware from the Soviet Union worth about 2.1 billion CSK. Since the end of 1955, it had organised military assistance, in which 1,492 Czechoslovak and Soviet experts, instructors and advisors were sent abroad, and a total of 307 foreigners were trained in courses organised in Czechoslovakia. Foreign exchange income from these undertakings amounted to approximately 100 million CSK, of which 32.4 million CSK belonged to the Soviet Union.

In the wake of the *Lidice* scandal and subsequent in-depth analysis of HTS operations, numerous changes were implemented. The director of the HTS, Major General František Macek, was fired on 26 May 1959 and transferred back to the Czechoslovak People's Army. The HTS itself underwent a thorough investigation, which showed a disproportionately high number of its workers' low knowledge of trade issues. Some activities were carried out only partially, or not at all, statistics and reporting were not sufficiently kept, insufficient economic analysis was carried out and systematic handling and monitoring of complaints together with proper organisation of service activities abroad were not carried out. The investigation concluded: 'The main reason for the identified shortcomings was the significant isolation of HTS from other sections of foreign trade, work overload of some departments, as well as shortcomings in the management and work system, non-compliance with the still valid organisational rules, guidelines, etc.' The inspection of the HTS continued until 1960 and led to numerous organisational changes within its ranks.[40]

However, this changed nothing regarding the increased activities of the HTS aimed at expanding the scope of arms exports from Czechoslovakia. The increase in HTS operations was made possible, among other things, by the liberalisation of the Czechoslovak arms trade during the 1960s. Initially, the sale of obsolete Czechoslovak and German rifles was made possible even for private arms trading companies from the West. Then, on 18 May 1965, the Presidium ÚV KSČ decided that the HTS would have the right to conclude contracts for the licence production of Czechoslovak special materiel in non-communist countries. In the meantime, the procedure for approving arms exports to non-communist states had been simplified and made more flexible.

Between 1963 and 1988, the HTS was led by general director František Langer, who simultaneously held the office of the deputy minister of foreign trade. From 1951–57, Langer worked in various positions in the Czechoslovak People's Army and joined the HTS in 1957 as a technical specialist. In November 1960, he became deputy director of the HTS at the age of 30. In this capacity, he also worked as the director of the foreign trade company OMNIPOL.[41]

The rise of the HTS was reflected in the number of its workers. While in 1957 it employed about 80 people, in 1988 – one year before the fall of communism in Czechoslovakia – the HTS had a staff numbering around 600. At the same time, the predominant number of military officers attached from the Czechoslovak People's Army was gradually replaced by civilian bureaucrats and traders. Their unique position, with access to the sensitive matters of foreign armies, meant many of them served at the same time as operatives of the Czechoslovak intelligence services.[42]

CZECHOSLOVAK ARMS EXPORT IN THE LATE 1950s AND EARLY 1960s

Following the first massive arms deals for Czechoslovak and Soviet armaments for Egypt and Syria in 1955 and 1956, the next customer for Prague's and Moscow's weapons was Yemen in July 1956. Like in the case of Egypt, Czechoslovakia played the role of middleman camouflaging the actual Soviet involvement. However, contrary to the Czechoslovak-Egyptian arms deals, the shipments of Czechoslovak arms to Yemen ended as a financial disaster for Prague due to the Soviet willingness to provide large-scale price discounts and subsequent Soviet pressure which forced the Czechoslovak communist leadership to accept the same payment conditions.

In 1958, an arms deal was concluded with Indonesia. Due to 'the pro-American orientation of the leadership of the ground forces', the main deliveries of the materiel were intended for the air force. The Indonesian Air Force is basically fully armed with Soviet, Czechoslovak and Polish materiel.' In addition, armament was supplied from Czechoslovakia for eight infantry battalions. The total value of the supplies was 202 million CSK.

Following France's withdrawal from French Guinea in 1959, the local authorities asked Prague for the provision of armament and equipment to ensure the internal and external security of the newly created Republic of Guinea. Prague provided military hardware for four combat battalions, as well as licence-manufactured Il-14 passenger airplanes and Czechoslovak Air Force personnel that allowed the emergence of the national airline Air Guinée.[43]

The politically most important arms deliveries of the early 1960s were carried out on behalf of Fidel Castro's regime in Cuba, mostly during the period from 1961–63. The shipments contained Czechoslovak infantry armament and engineer equipment, Soviet heavy weapons and re-exported ammunition from Bulgaria. The overall value of the deliveries (except for Bulgarian ammunition) reached almost £48.5 million (Soviet share *ca*. £18.4 million). However, the Cubans received large concessions: weapons worth £11.66 million were obtained free of charge, while additional arms valued at £31.76 million were delivered with a ⅔ discount from the original price. Despite such massive concessions, Havana had great problems in paying the much lower sum of money demanded by Prague. Thus, on 18 February 1971, the Czechoslovak government decided to forgive half of the amount owed (266 million CSK), and the second half of the instalments was postponed to the period 1976–81.[44]

Due to the major arms deliveries for Egypt and Syria between 1955 and 1957, many top-ranking communist officials came to the conclusion that the export of Czechoslovak armaments into non-aligned and neutral countries could serve as a reliable source of hard currency and a means for the development of the national economy. However, for various reasons, these visions were badly shattered several years later. One of the most important causes was the complete lack of modern major weapons systems manufactured in Czechoslovakia in the late 1950 and early 1960s. For example, all licence-built T-54A tanks were at first intended for the rearmament of the Czechoslovak People's Army. Moreover, Moscow did not initially approve their export to non-communist countries. On the other hand, at that time, several promising indigenous types were in the later stages of their development, such as the L-29 military jet trainer, OT-62 (upgrade of the Soviet BTR-50PK) and OT-64 APCs and the Tatra 813 tractor truck. Consequently, on 18 October 1963, the Military Commission for Defence ÚV KSČ (*Vojenská komise obrany ÚV KSČ*) ordered the HTS to survey sales opportunities of new types of Czechoslovak military hardware.

The analysis was ready in the late spring 1964, and its conclusions were not very optimistic:

> The results of the survey so far prove that it is not easy to find an effective use of Czechoslovak military technology abroad. Although the good concept and quality of the products of our

defence industry are recognised, those interested in purchasing weapons from the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic often [bear in] mind political aspects [namely the Czechoslovak communist regime], which is reflected especially in developed European neutral states, which are clearly inclined to the West. Naturally, political influences also have a negative effect on relations with developing countries, although they are usually not the only cause of disinterest in the purchase of armaments from the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. An important factor here is the fact that developing countries are often saturated with conventional technology and require state-of-the-art technology, such as aviation, radar or missile systems, which we do not have available for this purpose. As a result, in developing countries, which are forced to build their armies from scratch, we are unable to address their arming comprehensively, such as [can] the Soviet Union, which can also provide the necessary assistance free of charge or on such favourable terms as would not be bearable for our national economy. At the same time, the imperialist powers do not regret [expending] energy or funds to prevent or maximally limit the spreading of military hardware from socialist states into developing countries.

However, it cannot be overlooked that the longer delivery times of some of our products and concerns about the insufficient provision of spare parts often affect the customer's decision making. Once again, infantry weapons would be more attractive if they were designed for NATO ammunition. In several cases, there was interest in a recoilless gun, which, however, was not released for export.

It should be noted that especially in developing countries, the interest in finished military hardware is shifting to special production facilities, which would cover the needs of light ammunition and, in the next stage, infantry weapons. At the same time, there are more and more demands for the construction of complete turnkey plants and for the provision of initial materials for the start of production. Satisfying such requirements often encounters difficulties with available resources, which often deprives us of the opportunity to penetrate new markets with finished special products in a suitable way.

In the opinion of the Ministry of Foreign Trade, it would be unrealistic to consider the export of military hardware to non-socialist countries as a reliable source of foreign currency and a significant benefit for the national economy. Although it is necessary to continue the constant search for sales opportunities abroad, it is not possible to firmly calculate in perspective considerations [for] the export of military hardware to capitalist states. It must be considered only as a partial function of foreign trade, which has a predominantly political character.[45]

THE SITUATION IN THE 1960S

The political character of Czechoslovak arms shipments was indeed on the rise. With the emergence of different nationalist and separatist movements in North and Sub-Saharan Africa, Prague was swift to provide them with weapons and other military equipment for their struggle against colonial and state authorities. The first in the queue was, in 1957, the Algerian FLN (*Front de libération nationale*, the National Liberation Front), which paid for the provided weapons in cash. Contrary to this assistance, all subsequent arms shipments and training of military cadres were carried out of free of charge for the following leftist nationalist organisations in Sub-Saharan Africa: MPLA (*Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola*, the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola) in the Portuguese colony of Angola; SACP (the South African Communist Party) in the Republic of South Africa; PAIGC (*Partido Africano para a Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde*, the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde) in the Portuguese colony of Angola; FRELIMO (*Frente de Libertação de Moçambique*, the Mozambique Liberation Front) in the Portuguese colony of Mozambique; ZAPU (the Zimbabwe African People's Union) in Rhodesia (modern Zimbabwe); and SWAPO (the South West Africa People's Organisation) in South West Africa (modern Namibia).

However, activities related to military assistance to these movements were almost exclusively organised directly by the International Department ÚV KSČ (*Mezinárodní oddělení ÚV KSČ*). Besides, the shipments of weapons for armed wings of nationalist organisations were many times handled by the State Security (*Státní bezpečnost*, StB), which was the secret police and

A map of industrial facilities related to arms production in Czechoslovakia during the 1960s, for details see Table 1. (Map by Tom Cooper)

Ports in other countries used for Czechoslovak arms exports between 1945-1994. (Map by Tom Cooper)

main security agency in communist Czechoslovakia from 1945 to its dissolution in 1990.[46]

A massive financial drain for Czechoslovakia was the support for North Vietnam during the Vietnam War. Between 1965 and 1975, Prague provided Hanoi – free of charge – civilian and military assistance to an overall value of 2.3 billion CSK, from which deliveries of military hardware amounted to almost 1.1 billion CSK.[47]

Meanwhile, HTS officials were working hard to find new, solvent clients for Czechoslovak weapons. Using various persuasive methods, including paying bribes, they succeeded in locating customers such as Morocco, which ordered Czechoslovak-made tanks and armoured personnel carriers in 1967. Having little pro-communist sentiment, HTS officials were mostly interested only in earning as much hard currency as possible in Third World states in North and Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and South Asia. During the 1960s, this approach several times put them at odds with officers from the General Staff of the Czechoslovak People's Army, who were living in a dreamland of communist idealism and thought that Czechoslovak military assistance in these territories should not be provided strictly on a commercial basis, but should also respect 'political and military relevance':

> With a low level of conceptuality and passivity of this procedure and limited resources [in the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army] for the provision of materiel assistance, in some cases, a situation arises where assistance provided to countries with a positive political development perspective is limited and individual random actions, more profitable in terms of immediate foreign exchange profitability of the given business case, are preferred.[48]

Nevertheless, the HTS managed to expand the list of recipients of Czechoslovak armaments. Thus, from 1954–66, Czechoslovakia delivered military hardware to the following non-Warsaw Pact countries: Afghanistan, Algeria, Austria, Cambodia, Cuba, Cyprus, Egypt, Finland, Ghana, Guatemala, Guinea, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Laos, Mali, Morocco, North Yemen, Syria and Uganda. While sometimes the character of the military cooperation was extremely limited (e.g. Finland) or only short-lived (e.g. Ghana, Guatemala and Laos), in other cases the relations were long-term or even permanent (e.g. Afghanistan, Egypt and Syria).[49]

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Deliveries of Czechoslovak arms to non-aligned and neutral states were usually coupled with the training of their military cadres at home or in Czechoslovakia by members of the Czechoslovak People's Army. For these undertakings, Czechoslovak officials used the euphemistic term 'technical assistance'. The scope of Czechoslovak military aid was continuously expanded, and thus the official definition given of the technical assistance from October 1979 was as follows:

> Technical assistance in a special area, as a set of measures of the ministries concerned, addresses the comprehensive provision

TABLE 5: NUMBER OF FOREIGN MILITARY PERSONNEL (OUTSIDE THE SOVIET BLOC) IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA AND DISPATCHED CZECHOSLOVAK INSTRUCTORS, 1956–64[53]

	1956	1957	1958	1959	1960	1961	1962	1963	1964
Foreign military personnel trained in Czechoslovakia	151	223	107	101	376	432	311	284	396
Czechoslovak military instructors sent to Third World countries	168	155	146	92	109	200	157	189	240
Financial income	7,988,000 CSK	27,057,000 CSK	12,220,000 CSK	12,716,000 CSK	32,470,000 CSK	51,747,000 CSK	38,558,000 CSK	16,566,000 CSK	18,011,000 CSK

> of all issues related to the operation, maintenance and repairs of supplied military hardware and materials, the introduction of new production and new technologies in industrial works, construction or operation of various schools and institutes, through to the training of technicians, workers and other experts, in the form of sending specialists to provide technical assistance in the design, installation and commissioning of new plants and repair facilities and other industrial works, sending teachers and experts for various types of schools and institutes, training experts in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic and other [countries].[50]

The training of soldiers from Third World countries in Czechoslovakia began in earnest in December 1955, with several crash courses for members of the Egyptian armed forces. Except for politically motivated cases, which aimed at the support of communist North Vietnam and different leftist Sub-Saharan nationalist movements, the technical assistance was usually provided strictly on a commercial basis and on the condition of payment in cash. However, the beginnings of the training of foreign soldiers were not without problems, mostly due to the severe lack of competent and experienced instructors with the knowledge of Western languages such as English or French.

This was the direct outcome of purges following the communist coup d'état in February 1948 which removed a large part of the most capable and experienced officers from the ranks of the Czechoslovak Army. The first stage of persecution began as early as the end of February 1948. By mid-April of that year, 27 generals and over 800 other officers had been fired. Directed by Soviet advisors, several waves of purges took place until 1953, during which the pre-February 1948 Czechoslovak military leadership was completely destroyed. By 1952, more than 65 percent of serving officers were personnel who joined the armed forces only after February 1948 according to the so-called class and political criteria. In practice, this meant the 'right' social background and a willingness to serve the new regime. Professional and moral requirements were relegated to the background.[51]

Before travelling abroad, Czechoslovak military instructors and advisors were regularly checked out by the Military Counterintelligence (*Vojenská kontrarozvědka*) to ensure that they were sufficiently reliable and that in a foreign country there was no risk of their defection or leakage of classified information.

Until 1964, Czechoslovak military instructors trained soldiers and militants from the following non-aligned and neutral states in Czechoslovakia or abroad: Egypt, Syria, Yemen, Indonesia, Cuba, Afghanistan, Mali, Guinea, Algeria, Angola (MPLA), South Africa (SACP), Kenya and Uganda.

In the context of the Suez Crisis in 1956 and the ongoing supplies of Czechoslovak armament, relatively extensive training of Egyptian and Syrian soldiers began, in Czechoslovakia as well as Egypt and Syria. Between 1956 and 1958, limited training of military personnel was also conducted in Yemen. Between 1958 and 1963, 53 fighter pilots, 37 crews for Il-28 bombers, 31 pilots of Mi-4 helicopters and many ground technical personnel – a total of 205 people – were trained in Czechoslovakia for the Indonesian Air Force. At the same time, aircrews were trained directly in Indonesia. Technical assistance subsequently continued, but to a lesser extent, in connection with the supply of 14 L-29 Delfin training aircraft to Indonesia.

In 1961, a three-year programme of training of Afghan military technicians began in order to prepare them for service at a military-technical school, a military central repair workshop, an apprenticeship school and an ammunition maintenance plant that were constructed in Afghanistan at that time with Czechoslovak assistance. In September 1964, 133 Afghan officers completed their training in Czechoslovakia. In 1961 and 1962, aviation personnel were trained in Czechoslovakia for the national airlines of Guinea (29 people) and Mali (34 people). Guinean ground crews were also trained, but to a lesser extent. In addition, the Czechoslovak People's Army trained 117 military technicians, 30 fighter pilots and 30 aircraft technicians for the Cuban Armed Forces.[52]

FACILITIES FOR THE TRAINING OF FOREIGN SOLDIERS

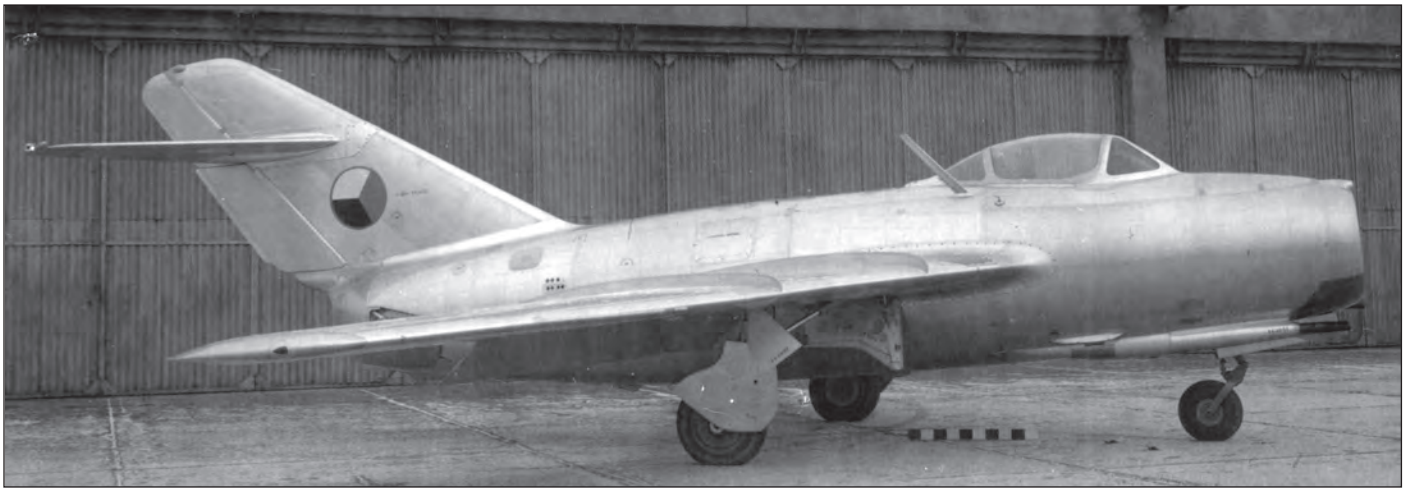
The early military training of Egyptian, Syrian and Indonesian soldiers in Czechoslovakia was undertaken without much coordination, which brought with it some problems. The training was organised on an ad hoc basis at different combat units and training establishments. For this reason, there was a varying quality of training provided, which brought repeated complaints from the 'customers'.

Another issue was the insufficient capacity of Czechoslovak military training facilities. For example, during 1957, the training capacity of the Czechoslovak Air Force was stretched to the limit due to the rapid influx of Egyptian aircrews. Thus, flight training regularly took place seven days a week, with the working day of the Czechoslovak pilots and ground personnel lasting 12–14 hours. Further specialised training had to be instructed by senior officers, one of them being the commander of the aviation division himself.[54]

However, from the Czechoslovak military leadership's point of view, the most pressing issue was the fact that the training of foreigners from outside the Warsaw Pact was undertaken by regular combat and training units. Czechoslovak generals were afraid that foreign soldiers could get to know the use of the latest types of weaponry (introduced only within the Warsaw Pact), the combat

Military facilities and schools in Czechoslovakia used for the training of foreign military personnel, 1948-1989. (Map by Tom Cooper)

An Ilyushin Il-14 transport made in Czechoslovakia. The licence production of this type was conducted by Avia from under the designation Av.14, and resulted in emergence of three unique variants, the designation of each of which was expanded by the number of passengers it could carry: the Av.14/32 was the original model, four of which were equipped with a large loading ramp in the late 1960s; nine Av.14/32s had a one metre longer fuselage and were used by the Czechoslovak Air Force for transporting paratroopers; while the Av.14/40 was the longest variant ever manufactured. (via Martin Smisek)



Due to the Soviet 'influence', Czechoslovakia found no export customers outside the communist countries for locally manufactured MiG-15s other than Egypt, Syria and Indonesia. Nevertheless, the country's arms-selling authorities secured orders for numerous large-scale training programmes from customers abroad. (VÚA-VHA Praha)

capability of the respective units as well as the readiness of their troops.

Therefore, within the General Staff of the Czechoslovak People's Army, new teams were established which were responsible for the export of surplus military hardware (in cooperation with the HTS), the organisation of the training of foreign troops in Czechoslovakia and the dispatching of instructors abroad. In the early 1960s, a whole new department (*Oddělení technické pomoci* – Technical Assistance Department) was established for managing this agenda. On 1 November 1966, this department was reorganised into the Administration for Foreign Relations (*Správa pro zahraniční styk*). Although this authority was reorganised again several years later, the General Staff had specially designed sections of senior officers responsible for the organisation of technical assistance until the end of the Cold War.

Another important step for improving the quality of technical assistance was the establishment (in the early 1960s) of facilities specifically designed for the training of soldiers from Third World countries. There was now a cadre of dedicated instructors and interpreters who were accustomed to the peculiarities of training military personnel from areas such as the Middle East or Sub-Saharan Africa. At the same time, these men could be dispatched abroad to provide the required training directly in the customer's country.

For this purpose, the Czechoslovak Air Force established the 4th Aviation Training Regiment (*4. letecký školní pluk*) in August 1962. Its mission was to provide elementary, advanced and combat training of pilots and other aircrew of helicopters, fighter and transport airplanes. There was also an air force training outfit named the Tactical-Technical Courses (*Takticko-technické kurzy*), which carried out theoretical lectures for pilots, technical training of aircraft technicians and maintenance personnel, and staff courses for commanders and staff officers of units up to the level of a regiment or division (in the latter case, only courses for staff officers). They also organised preparatory courses for foreign students of the Antonín Zápotocký Military Academy (*Vojenská akademie Antonína Zápotockého*, VAAZ).

Military officials in developing countries usually demanded the full training of a fighter or transport pilot. As long as the MiG-15 fighters and Il-14 transports constituted the backbone of the Czechoslovak Air Force fighter, fighter-bomber and transport regiments, then the advantage for Czechoslovakia was that it was able to train ready-made combat and transport pilots for the customer. With the introduction of supersonic MiG-21 fighters and Su-7 fighter-bombers during the 1960s (and without having four-engine An-12 transport aircraft), the Czechoslovak Air Force was no longer able to train pilots in a complex fashion, but only for transitional types (the MiG-15bis and Il-14). As a result, foreign officials were forced to seek flight training for military pilots in other countries. Hence, in the end, only the Soviet Union was usually able to regularly provide such training within the Warsaw Pact. With the decommissioning of the outdated MiG-15s and Il-14s in the early 1970s, the Czechoslovak Air Force was resigned to the need for a separate unit for the training of foreign pilots, so the 4th Aviation Training Regiment was disbanded in August 1973. Another reason for this decision was insufficient interest from clients, since the training of aircrews was a matter of fierce competition internationally. In order to obtain political leverage, some Western and Eastern Bloc air forces provided flight training for Third World countries under very favourable financial conditions or sometimes even free of charge – something that was almost always completely unacceptable for Prague.

Consequently, subsequent training of military pilots from neutral and non-aligned countries was organised in the frame of regular Czechoslovak aviation training regiments subordinated to the Military Aviation University (*Vysoká vojenská letecká škola*, VVLŠ) at Košice. In addition, from 1983, the VVLŠ had within its ranks the Foreign Aviation Training Centre (*Středisko zahraničního leteckého výcviku*).[55]

ZF VAAZ: ALMA MATER OF FOREIGN SOLDIERS

Meanwhile, an analogous establishment was created for the training of mostly ground forces personnel. The Antonín Zápotocký Military Technical Academy (*Vojenská technická akademie Antonína Zápotockého*, VTA AZ) in Brno bore the brunt of the initial training of foreign soldiers. Indeed, training of foreigners began here in earnest during the school year 1955/56 with the commencement of studies of six servicemen from the People's Republic of China and three from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea; they studied the design of artillery weapons, tanks and mines. During December 1955, the VTA AZ accepted the initial cadre of Egyptian armour, artillery, signal and maintenance instructors for a series of hastily organised short-term, introductory training sessions. As well as the VTA AZ (in 1958 reorganised into the VAAZ), additional training courses for soldiers from non-Warsaw Pact states were undertaken at different military schools and military repair plants.

Analysis from 1959 showed that the training of military personnel from the Third World would still be in high demand between 1960 and 1965. In order to remove existing deficiencies and streamline the organisation of this training, it was decided to establish a specialised facility designated strictly for the training and education of mostly ground forces personnel from non-Warsaw Pact countries. Hence, the Foreign Faculty of the Antonín Zápotocký Military Academy (*Zahraniční fakulta Vojenské akademie Antonína Zápotockého*,

TABLE 6: CZECHOSLOVAK MILITARY ADVISORS AND INSTRUCTORS DEPLOYED TO NON-COMMUNIST COUNTRIES (AVERAGE NUMBER OF EXPERTS PER YEAR), 1965–79[58]

COUNTRY	1965–70	1971–75	1976	1977	1978	1979 (AS OF 30 APRIL)
Egypt	181	166	55	29	-	-
Afghanistan	35	9	7	9	7	4
Uganda	8	7	9	8	2	2
Syria	5	9	-	-	-	14
Iraq	8	3	6	6	15	25
Morocco	8	-	-	-	-	-
Indonesia	2	-	-	-	-	-
Libya	-	-	11	608	785	552
Pakistan	-	-	-	-	-	10
TOTAL	**247**	**194**	**88**	**660**	**809**	**607**

The main administrative building of the ZF VAAZ, as seen in recent times. (Photo by Martin Smisek)

Another building of the ZF VAAZ. (Photo by Martin Smisek)

TABLE 7: MILITARY AND SECURITY PERSONNEL FROM NON-COMMUNIST COUNTRIES TRAINED IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA IN FACILITIES OF THE FEDERAL MINISTRY OF NATIONAL DEFENCE AND FEDERAL MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR (AVERAGE NUMBER OF TRAINEES PER YEAR), 1965–79[59]

COUNTRY	1965–70	1971–75	1976	1977	1978	1979 (AS OF 30 APRIL)
Egypt	70	77	30	103	1	
Uganda	16	35	-	-	-	-
Syria	26	20	100	50	20	30
Afghanistan	-	-	-	34	-	-
Iraq	20	15	72	40	40	8
Morocco	29	-	-	-	-	-
Indonesia	6	-	-	-	-	-
Nigeria	-	7	-	-	-	-
India	3	1	-	-	-	-
Libya	-	-	-	-	192	389
TOTAL	**170**	**155**	**202**	**227**	**253**	**427**

ZF VAAZ) was established in Brno on 1 August 1960 with an initial cadre of 120. At the same time, the ZF VAAZ organised professional and language preparation of Czechoslovak military instructors and advisors for their service abroad. The most common mission of the ZF VAAZ was the training of foreign military technical personnel in the operation, maintenance and repair of military hardware delivered by Czechoslovakia to the respective country. Standard training of foreign servicemen took three years and was undertaken in the Czech language.

Until 1965, foreign experts were trained on older types of military hardware, which were imported from Czechoslovakia or the Soviet Union, or on foreign types that were used in the Second World War (especially artillery and infantry weapons). After 1965, training mainly took place only on equipment supplied from Czechoslovakia, especially T-54A tanks (later T-55) and OT-62 and OT-64 APCs (later also BVP-1 infantry fighting vehicles).

From the outset, the organisation of the training of foreigners at the ZF VAAZ included elements that were designed to arouse positive opinion about Czechoslovakia and its communist regime:

[The] long-term stay of foreign experts must be considered from all points of view – professional growth, sports and cultural activities, catering, the impact of surroundings, organising tours, visits to memorial and cultural monuments of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, with the intention to influence the thinking of foreign experts, to define in cooperation with the Main Political Administration appropriate ways of political action, including the

The ZF VAAZ complex included a hostel for foreign students. (Photo by Martin Smisek)

Former training facilities for foreign students of the ZF VAAZ. (Photo by Martin Smisek)

> organisation of teaching the basics of Marx-Leninism in those cases where it is a requirement and part of teaching according to the contract.[56]

Czechoslovak experts from the ZF VAAZ already from the beginning played a very crucial role in the establishment and further development of the Military Technical College at Cairo in Egypt. From the mid-1960s, the ZF VAAZ provided teaching at the military-technical academy in Pol-e-Charkhi near Kabul in Afghanistan, where between 12 and 20 Czechoslovak teachers had worked for several years. Additional ZF VAAZ lecturers provided teaching in several specialisations at the Military Technical College at Baghdad in Iraq from the late 1970s until 1985.

Technical assistance attained its peak during the 1970s, when supplies of Czechoslovak military hardware to non-communist countries (or more precisely, to the Middle East) culminated. Indeed, around 1979, the scope of military assistance completely drained the existing capacities both of the ZF VAAZ in Brno and the Military Aviation University in Košice, until it almost began to threaten the quality of training of new recruits of the Czechoslovak People's Army at both these institutions. Demand for the coming years just continued to grow. Consequently, the Czechoslovak government, in its Resolution No. 251 from 11 October 1979, decided to increase the number of personnel for the training of cadres from non-communist countries by 217 (95 soldiers and 122 civilian employees). At the same time, it was decided to build a new dormitory for 200–300 foreign students because the capacity of the existing facility for 130 people was fully exhausted and foreign students had to be accommodated provisionally in various places around Brno.[57]

GOLDEN AGE OF CZECHOSLOVAK ARMS EXPORT

The late 1960s brought increased demand for rapid delivery of Czechoslovak military materiel from different non-communist countries (armament shipments within the Warsaw Pact were organised within the frame of long-term plans). However, due to the inefficiency and rigidity of the Czechoslovak centrally planned economy, Prague struggled to satisfy the arms requirements of its clients. Since hard currency and goods thus obtained represented important items in the state budget, something had to be done to remedy this unsatisfactory situation. Therefore, on 1 November 1967, the Presidium ÚV KSČ ordered the establishment of the Separate Fund of Special Equipment (*Zvláštní fond speciální techniky*). The fund was created on 1 January 1968 to create stocks of military hardware for export to non-communist countries. Ordering, acceptance, storage, guarding, dispatch and potential maintenance of armaments were provided by the Ministry of National Defence, under instructions from the HTS.[60]

The second half of the 1960s brought renewed interest, by coincidence primarily from the Middle East, in Czechoslovak-made armoured vehicles, which culminated during the 1970s. Between 1965 and 1969, Iraq acquired several hundred OT-62 and OT-64 APCs, while Egypt bought large numbers of T-55 tanks and OT-62s in preparation for the Yom Kippur War that broke out in October 1973. Syria ordered several hundred T-55 tanks and its variants, not only before the Yom Kippur War but thereafter to compensate for heavy losses suffered during fighting with the Israel Defense Forces. The golden age of Czechoslovak arms exports came between 1971 and 1979, when Libya bought several hundred T-55 tanks and related armoured support vehicles. Libyan demands were so high that they even exceeded the excessive production capacity at Závody ťažkého strojárstva Martin.

The second main item of Czechoslovak arms exports to these countries was jet trainers, initially L-29 Delfins during the early 1970s, which were superseded by L-39 Albatros aircraft. Czechoslovakia also delivered other types of special materiel, such as infantry weapons or anti-aircraft guns.

The most important customer for arms from Czechoslovakia outside the Warsaw Pact states and the Middle East during the 1970s

and early 1980s was India, which obtained during that time frame, among other things, some 300 vehicles of the T-55 series, 300 OT-62 tracked APCs, 20 DTP-62 armoured repair vehicles, 100 OT-64 wheeled APCs and more than 330 Tatra 813 tractor trucks.[61]

Meanwhile, on 15 May 1971, a new system of cover designations for all countries outside the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance was put into operation for written and telephone communication between the Federal Ministry of National Defence[62] and the HTS. The numbering system took over from that used at the time at the Ministry of Foreign Trade. The cover numbers of states in the Middle East and North Africa from this system are listed in Table 8.[63] A new concept of cover numbers for communist and non-communist countries was introduced at the Federal Ministry of National Defence around 1976. The known numbering within this system is detailed in Table 9.

TABLE 8: COVER NUMBERS OF NON-COMMUNIST COUNTRIES IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA, 1971–CA.1976[64]

COVER NUMBER	COUNTRY
607	Iraq
608	Iran
609	Israel
611	North Yemen (Yemen Arab Republic)
614	Jordan
616	Kuwait
619	Lebanon
623	other countries of the Arabian Peninsula (Bahrain, Aden, Pirate Coast, Hadramaut, Oman, Muscat, Qatar)
625	Saudi Arabia
627	Syria
633	South Yemen (People's Democratic Republic of Yemen)
641	Algeria
658	Libya
663	Morocco
673	Egypt (United Arab Republic)
679	Tunisia

TABLE 9: SYSTEM OF COVER NUMBERS FOR COMMUNIST AND NON-COMMUNIST COUNTRIES FROM CA.1976[65]

COVER NUMBER	COUNTRY
101	Soviet Union
121	Bulgaria
131	Hungary
141	East Germany
151	Poland
615	India
619	Iraq
625	South Yemen (People's Democratic Republic of Yemen)
659	Syria
711	Egypt
737	Libya
781	Uganda

COORDINATION OF MILITARY ASSISTANCE

Although basically every Warsaw Pact country provided military aid in some form to the neutral and non-aligned states preferred by the Soviet Union, Moscow paid no attention to mutual coordination to improve the overall efficiency of these efforts. It was as if every Warsaw Pact country played its very own ball game on the Soviet playground according to Moscow's rules. Thus, Warsaw Pact countries several times acted as direct competitors, although in Moscow's view it would be more appropriate for them to act as a single team.

A change came in the late 1970s. At the 12th meeting of the Committee of Defence Ministers of the Member States of the Warsaw Pact in Warsaw in December 1979, the Statute on the Coordination of the Activities of the Member States of the Warsaw Pact in Conducting Military-Technical Cooperation with Developing Countries was approved.

Without prior consultation, the Soviets had prepared this statute for the 11th meeting of the Committee of Defence Ministers, held in Berlin in December 1978. Due to the complexity of the issue and lack of time for proper analysis, Czechoslovak officials requested the withdrawal of this topic from the agenda. The same position was taken by several other Warsaw Pact states, so the statute was presented at the meeting for information only. However, a resolution was adopted in which the ministers of defence were instructed to discuss the draft statute with the relevant competent authorities and, with the consent of their governments, to inform the USSR's Ministry of Defence about their proposals.

During 1979, consultations took place between Moscow and the individual states of the Warsaw Pact. Based on these meetings, the Soviet Ministry of Defence prepared a final draft of the statute, which dealt with military and technical cooperation in the areas of armament and military hardware deliveries, transfer of licence technical documentation, technical assistance in operation and repair of military hardware and construction of industrial works, dispatching of experts to developing countries and preparation of foreign personnel in the countries of the Warsaw Pact. The statute set out conditions and ways of cooperation in individual areas.

According to the Czechoslovaks, the statute essentially expressed the level achieved of military-technical assistance to developing countries in the Third World as exercised by Prague. The most important new political-economic principle in the statute concerned cooperation between the Warsaw Pact countries: 'Competent authorities carry out systematic exchanges of information and consultations on issues of common interest with an objective of harmonising the activity at the implementation of military-technical cooperation with developing countries, including the conditions of supply of armaments and military hardware as well as the provision of technical assistance.'[66]

TABLE 10: CZECHOSLOVAK MILITARY ADVISORS IN SELECTED COUNTRIES OF THE MIDDLE EAST, 1981–85[67]

COUNTRY	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Syria	38	32	37	43	6
Iraq	27	26	37	32	12
Iran	0	2	2	2	0

THE BEGINNING OF THE END

Despite the opulent 1970s, Czechoslovak arms exports to non-communist countries had one inherent and very serious deficiency that caused fatal problems during the forthcoming decade. Analysis from 1967 had warned the Presidium ÚV KSČ that 'a substantial part of the deliveries of military hardware took place on credit – on average 5–10 years at a very low interest rate of 2–2.5 percent – and therefore – due to the domestic political and mainly economic instability of customer countries – with a constant risk of liquidity of Czechoslovak receivables'.[68]

However, Prague was caught in Moscow's trap. Soviet insistence on the establishment of large factories for the licence production of tanks and other armoured vehicles, which had to be supplied to Warsaw Pact members at very low prices (in comparison to Czechoslovak manufacturing costs), had two outcomes. Firstly, Czechoslovakia needed additional foreign customers to efficiently utilise existing excessive production capacities; and secondly, it required clients able to pay adequate prices that could generate profit and compensate for unprofitable production for Warsaw Pact armies. All of this was in a situation where Moscow decided what type of licenced armament could be exported from Czechoslovakia and to which countries.

Vitally, income from arms exports constituted an important source of hard currency for the Czechoslovak treasury, which was then mostly used to obtain civilian goods and materials in the West, since some of these were unavailable within the Soviet Bloc. Moreover, the gradual decline of the technical standard of exported civilian engineering products meant a decline in interest in this type of goods during the 1980s. Consequently, the export of Czechoslovak weapons became even more important in obtaining hard currency in those times. Unfortunately for Prague, the economies of its most important clients were fragile, so deliveries of arms were only possible using long-term credit, mostly with low interest rates.

Problems for non-communist states regarding the repayment of Czechoslovakia for the supply of military hardware were nothing new. Already during the mid-1960s, some countries had requested a deferral of payments (the United Arab Republic, Syria and Cuba) or were unable to repay the debts at all (Indonesia, Yemen and Mali). Although the Ministry of Foreign Trade had, during the first half of the 1970s, repeatedly warned that the indebtedness of some states (such as Syria or Egypt) was reaching critical proportions, the Presidium ÚV KSČ was still approving additional large arms contracts using long-term credit to the very same countries. At that time, the states in question paid their instalments basically without problems, and Prague had no other suitable clients for such large numbers of armoured vehicles or jet trainers.

The export of Czechoslovak military hardware to non-communist countries in the early 1980s reached a position where 95 percent of such revenues came from only three countries: Libya, Syria and Iraq. However, due to the oil glut of the 1980s, various conflicts, economic mismanagement or different sanctions, all three nations began to have serious financial problems at virtually the same moment. The first sign of difficulties was a Libyan request from early 1982, in which Tripoli demanded, because of its lack of hard currency, that 90 percent of additional Czechoslovak military supplies be paid in the form of Libyan oil. Over time, the economic problems of these three states only increased, and they eventually stopped paying their debts altogether. Economic complications were also growing within the Warsaw Pact. For this reason, during 1982, Hungary and Bulgaria refused to order 112 T-72 tanks. This trend only worsened during the second half of the 1980s.[69]

CLIMAX AND DOWNFALL

Despite the negative prospects, arms production in Czechoslovakia reached its peak in 1987, amounting to 29 billion CSK. This accounted for about 4 percent of gross domestic product and created almost 8 percent of total industrial production. More than half of this went to Warsaw Pact states, while about one-fifth was exported to Third World countries. From 1984–88, Czechoslovakia exported weapons and military hardware to the value of US$2.7 billion (in 1985 prices), and thus ranked seventh among the world's biggest arms exporters. In the late 1980s, more than 100 Czechoslovak companies participated in the production of weapons, of which almost 40 were located in today's Slovakia. Some 73,000 people worked directly in the field of military production, and according to various estimates, another 50,000–70,000 people participated indirectly.[70] As of 1989, Czechoslovakia had an annual production capacity of 300 T-72 tanks and 1,300 BVP-2 infantry fighting vehicles, as well as 200 9P135 launchers and 10,000 9M113 missiles of the Konkurs anti-tank guided missile system.[71]

The reduction in arms spending and economic problems at home, in the Warsaw Pact states and in the largest customers outside the Soviet Bloc inevitably led to a reduction in arms production. The situation was serious, but not yet critical because the Soviet Union remained the largest customer of Czechoslovak armaments (between 1981 and 1985, Moscow took 62.9 percent of Czechoslovak arms exports). However, the writing was on the wall. During negotiations in early April 1989, the Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR, Igor Belousov, informed Czechoslovak officials about large reductions in Soviet acquisitions of Czechoslovak armament for the forthcoming five-year plan (1991–95). These plans crumbled completely with the demise of the Soviet Union in December 1991, which spelled the definitive end of large-scale armament manufacturing in Czechoslovakia.[72]

In the meantime, a decision on the reduction of arms production was made by the Czechoslovak government at the end of July 1988, with the first armaments projects stopped by Resolution No. 112 of 26 July. On 21 September 1989, the Czechoslovak government adopted Resolution No. 84, which ordered the winding down of tank production at Závody ťažkého strojárstva Martin by the end of 1990. Production of APCs was to be stopped in the coming years. According to the then plans, by 1992, arms production was to decrease by about 80 percent in Bohemia and Moravia, and by more than 90 percent in Slovakia.

CZECHOSLOVAKIA IN THE MIDDLE EAST

The Middle East was already an important area for the sale of Czechoslovak products in the period before the Second World War. This encouraged the establishment of diplomatic relations, and so in the territory of the region's most important independent states and dependent territories, Czechoslovak embassies, consulates or honorary consulates were established: in Egypt, Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria. The

first Czechoslovak consulate in the Middle East was established at Alexandria in Egypt in 1920, some two years after Czechoslovakia became an independent state. During the Second World War, some diplomatic relations were severed (Iran), while others lasted (Egypt).

After the end of the war, Czechoslovakia played a unique role in the creation of the state of Israel, to which it supplied weapons despite the United Nations embargo. Thanks to this help, Israel was able to succeed in the 1948 Arab-Israeli War and gain the upper hand over its Arab neighbours. At this time, however, Prague was already playing the role of a Soviet proxy. When it became clear in the late 1940s and early 1950s that Israel would not become a communist country, solid relations between the two states were disrupted by the Czechoslovak communist government. This situation culminated immediately after the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, after which Czechoslovakia severed diplomatic relations with Israel. Details of Czechoslovak-Israeli military relations and Czechoslovak arms shipments are covered in a separate chapter of this work.

From the mid-1950s, Czechoslovakia had become an important partner of Arab states, which had strongly focused their foreign policy on the Soviet Union (Nasser's Egypt, Ba'athist Syria, Ba'athist Iraq, Algeria under the rule of Ben Bella, and royalist and later republican North Yemen). Czechoslovak military assistance and supplies of military hardware to these countries reached a considerable (and sometimes even massive) volume, and therefore will be described in later volumes, as is military cooperation with Libya during the reign of Muammar Gaddafi.

At the same time, trade and official diplomatic relations were gradually established with countries that were among the West's leading allies. Due to their relatively large (albeit time-limited) scope, military assistance and supplies of military hardware to countries such as Iran or Morocco will also be described in later volumes. Nevertheless, Czechoslovak special materiel was delivered in small numbers to other such states, and details of these shipments (to Kuwait, Lebanon, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia and the United Arab Emirates) are provided in the following text.

In addition, in the Persian Gulf there was a group of conservative Arab monarchies, with whose representatives Czechoslovak state officials held occasional informal talks, but due to the reluctance of local political elites, the Czechoslovak authorities failed to establish diplomatic relations. This mainly concerned Saudi Arabia, Oman, Bahrain, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. Despite these circumstances, Czechoslovak weapons, albeit in limited numbers, found their way into these countries, which is also documented in the text below.

A specific position was held by the Yemen People's Democratic Republic – the only communist state to be established in the Arab world. However, from Prague's point of view, this state functioned primarily as a constant and irritating source of requests for free aid, including military assistance. Relatively significant deliveries of Czechoslovak infantry weapons to South Yemen will therefore also be provided in detail in a separate volume.[73]

KUWAIT

Kuwait was the only Arab monarchy in the Persian Gulf with which communist Czechoslovakia maintained relatively advanced relations. A former British Protectorate, Kuwait became fully independent in June 1961. Prague followed Moscow, and thus diplomatic relations at the embassy level were not established until 27 May 1963. However, on 22 August 1961, Kuwaiti businessman Sabeh Bajjani had personally visited the Czechoslovak embassy in Beirut and requested, in the name of Kuwaiti Minister of Defence Salem el Sabah, the delivery of infantry weapons (mostly submachine guns, machine guns and personal weapons) for the Kuwaiti Army and Kuwaiti police force. Since, at that time, Kuwait was not on the list of countries that could buy Czechoslovak weapons, no deal materialised. This changed on 21 July 1964, when the Presidium ÚV KSČ approved the export of military hardware to all countries of the League of Arab States.[74]

Kuwaiti prosperity, driven by oil exports, prompted the HTS to try to win contracts for the supply of special materiel. In June 1965, Major Vladimír Kudrna and HTS official Ladislav Mrva arrived in Kuwait to carry out a practical presentation of Czechoslovak small arms: the vz. 58 assault rifle, vz. 61 submachine gun, vz. 52/57 rifle, vz. 52/57 light machine gun and vz. 37 heavy machine gun. Major Kudrna, in his subsequent report, stated:

> The unloading of weapons (disassembled and packed in five packages) [at the airport] took place very quickly with an obvious effort to keep the whole event secret. The packages of weapons were loaded into the passenger car of Mr Hassan (commissioner of the Kuwaiti minister of finance) and taken to an unknown location. Since then, we have not seen the weapons and we have not been asked to help with the assembly of weapons or to demonstrate the weapons with live fire. The reason for refusing our help was to try to keep the whole event secret from disclosure.
>
> The whole meeting was arranged by the commissioner of the Kuwaiti minister of finance, Mr Hassan. On Saturday, 12 June, we were also received with Comrade Dobeš [Czechoslovak *chargé d'affaires*] by Minister of Finance, Sheikh Jaber, and on Sunday, Minister of Defence, Sheikh Saad, in the presence of the commander of the army and his adjutant. Only brief technical issues were discussed, but no specific negotiations on arms orders took place. The main interest was shown in the vz. 58 submachine gun [sic]. During the meeting with the minister of defence, interest was also expressed in other types of weapons, such as

TABLE 11: KNOWN CZECHOSLOVAK ARMS EXPORT TO KUWAIT, 1961–74[77]

TYPE	NUMBER OF EXAMPLES	YEAR OF DELIVERY	NOTE
vz. 52/57, 7.62mm rifle	1,000	1965	from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army
vz. 58, 7.62mm assault rifle		1965	from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army
vz. 61, 7.65mm submachine gun	several examples	1960s	from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army
vz. 52, 7.62mm machine gun	120	1965	from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army
vz. 37, 7.92mm heavy machine gun	900	1965	from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army
vz. 43, 7.62mm round	5,620	1967	from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army

> anti-tank and anti-aircraft missiles, field cannons and others. An [vz. 59] 82mm recoilless gun [and] a [vz. 53/59] 30mm anti-aircraft twin-gun were preliminarily offered to them by the MZO/HTS representative Mrva. No specific conclusion nor offer was reached.
>
> Given that Sheikh Jaber will officially visit the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic this year, it is very likely that specific agreements would be concluded during his visit. At various meetings, his commissioner, Mr Hassan, emphasised the need to ensure the dignified reception of Sheikh Jaber.
>
> He mainly emphasised that it would be very appropriate to show Sheikh Jaber various types of weapons in some military area. Due to the fact that Mr Hassan was promised a possible commission (approx. 4–5%) from the agreed delivery, he arranged all meetings very agilely. Before the departure of the delegation, he brought a cheque to the Bank of England, which paid for all weapons, including costs for air transportation. In the end, the costs of hotel accommodation were paid.

However, despite all the efforts made, the results were mediocre – only deals for infantry weapons in 1965 and ammunition in 1967. Otherwise, only a few vz. 61 submachine guns were delivered (for details see Table 11).[75]

In 1973, the Chief of General Staff of the Kuwait Military Forces requested Czechoslovak authorities to create a project for a military air base and to carry out its comprehensive construction. The Military Project Institute (*Vojenský projektový ústav*) was selected to fulfil the former task, while the latter was out of the question since the Vojenské stavby company had no capacity to fulfil this job. Further developments in this matter are unknown.[76]

LEBANON

The Czechoslovak consulate in Beirut had functioned since 1926, while official diplomatic relations between Czechoslovakia and Lebanon were established in September 1946. After the communist coup, however, political and trade relations between the countries were significantly reduced. From Prague's point of view, Lebanon was not a place of special political interest. However, it was considered a place with numerous opportunities to obtain important intelligence about other countries in the Middle East. In the mid-1950s, Czechoslovakia renewed its interest in more intensive activities in Lebanon because it was possible to import goods through the country to other Arab states that, in those times, were difficult to access for business representatives from the Soviet Bloc, such as Iraq, Jordan or Saudi Arabia.[78]

This situation worked the opposite way as well, and the Czechoslovak embassy in Beirut became from the early 1960s a place where various Arab traders sought Czechoslovak infantry weapons for potential customers from the Persian Gulf region. In late 1963, tender documents for new types of Czechoslovak small arms were sent to the business department of the Czechoslovak embassy in Beirut in case the interest of Lebanese officials was obtained. In April 1964, HTS representatives made a business trip to Lebanon, during which they established direct contact with officials of the local Ministry of National Defence.[79]

In 1965, Czechoslovakia delivered to Lebanon samples of pyrotechnics worth 6,000 CSK, sports firearms worth 36,000 CSK and ammunition for shooting sports worth 380,000 CSK.[80]

During the same year, the Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs had to solve a 'complication' with the smuggling of small arms. In late January, a passenger airplane of Czechoslovak Airlines (*Československé aerolinie*) flying from Prague to Baghdad through Sofia and Beirut was halted at Beirut International Airport. The reason for this was that six boxes declared as machine spare parts, that were unloaded from the plane, contained 250 military pistols. The consignment was loaded in Sofia, the shipper was officially stated as INCOSE COMP. INC., 16A Central Avenue, Panama and the consignee was WADIH MOUNSEF, Beirut. Subsequent investigations by the Czechoslovak Ministry of the Foreign Trade showed that:

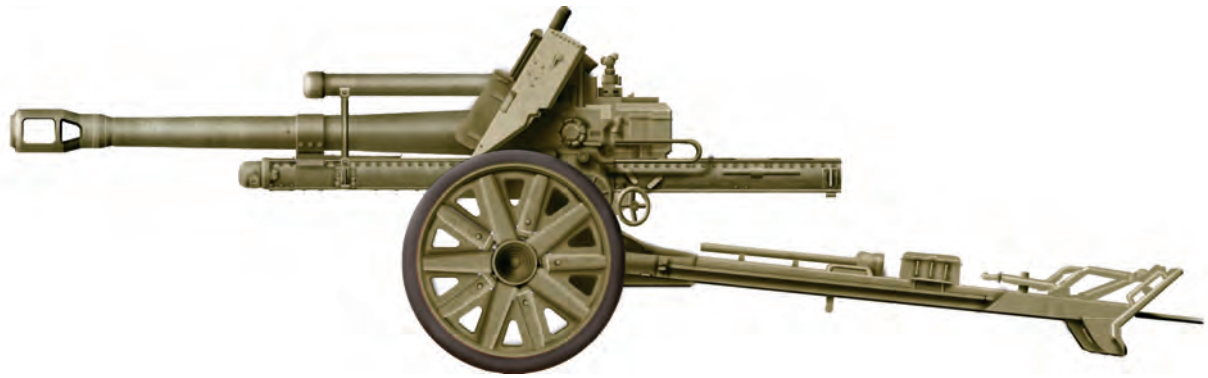
> [I]t was not a supply arranged by the Ministry of Foreign Trade and [it is considered] that this is a matter agreed by the Bulgarian authorities. In this context, I would like to say that it is possible that the Bulgarian side, given that it does not produce the pistols, has re-exported weapons imported from the Soviet Union or Czechoslovakia. In the past, it re-exported in a similar manner without the permission of the Ministry of Foreign Trade of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic a consignment of light anti-tank weapons and hunting ammunition.

However, no scandal developed since, as an embassy official stated, 'in Beirut, smuggling is a daily occurrence and no one is particularly surprised. Nevertheless, through an intervention with our friend the general director of customs, we achieved that a confiscation report would be issued to Transas, stating that the boxes were loaded in Sofia and that the pistols were of the brand RADOM – probably Polish-made.'[81]

In late 1969 or early 1970, the Czechoslovak foreign trading company Transakta delivered 60,000 military jackets (Contract No. 112/9824) and various uniforms (Contract No. 112/9825) from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army to Lebanese businessman H.H. Didizian.[82]

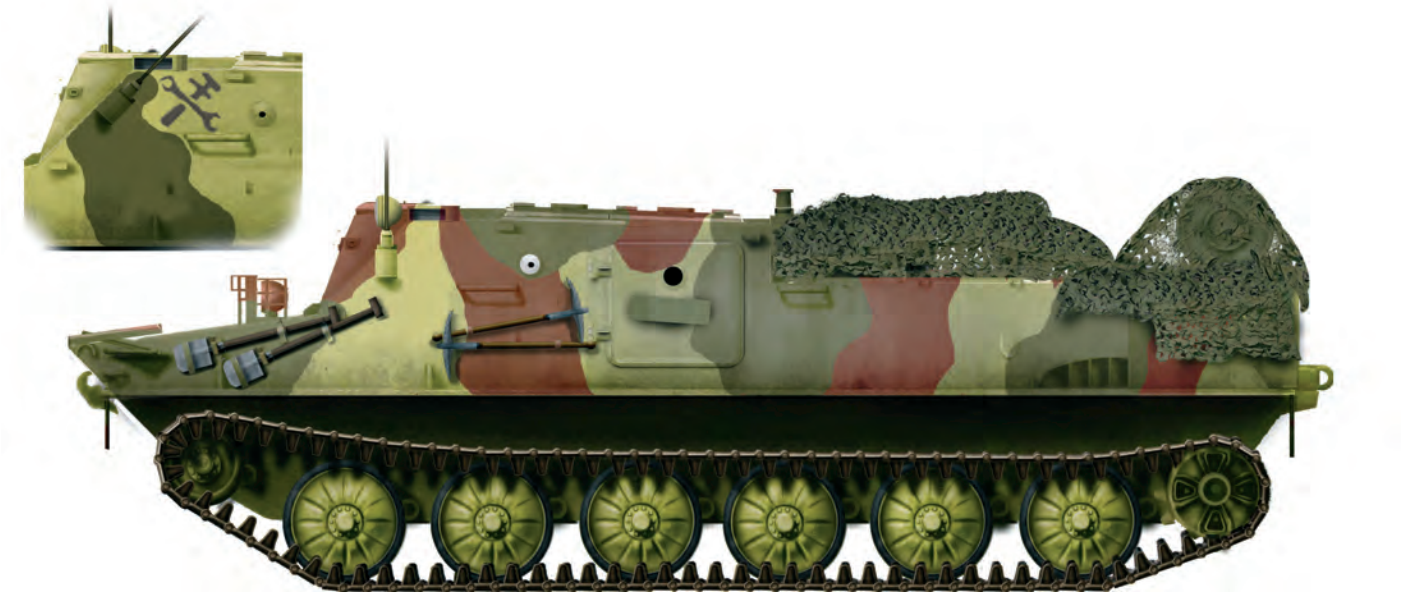
During the early 1970s, the Czechoslovak diplomatic officials in Lebanon once again had to deal with the smuggling of weapons. In February 1970, a shipment of vz. 58 assault rifles declared as spare parts was detained at Beirut airport. Subsequent Czechoslovak investigations showed that this was part of the 505 vz. 58s that OMNIPOL sold to Lebanese Member of Parliament Michel Debs. The weapons were intended for the Lebanese Ministry of National Defence, but Debs distanced himself from the whole affair after their detention. In May 1971, a similar case was repeated when a shipment of 816 7.62mm pistols with 900 magazines made in Czechoslovakia was found in packages of worn clothing. This time it was a delivery under a September 1970 contract between OMNIPOL and the businessman Mohamed Taysir Masri for 900 pistols with spare magazines. Masri had promised not to transport weapons destined for Kuwait through Lebanon, but instead bought used jute bags, packed pistols in them and handed them over to the Čechofracht transport company for shipment to Beirut like rags. As a consequence, OMNIPOL suspended contacts with both traders.[83]

On 12 October 1973, in the middle of the Yom Kippur War, the HTS received a request from the commander of the Lebanese Armed Forces, General Iskandar Ghanem, for the supply of 8 million 7.62mm NATO rounds. The Czechoslovak embassy in Lebanon discussed the matter with the Soviet embassy in Beirut, which recommended the deal go ahead. Prague consequently approved the sale of ammunition and at the same time offered the possibility of delivering up to 12 million rounds. Meanwhile, Lebanese officials, who were to receive a 4 percent 'kickback' for successfully concluding the contract, increased the requirement



Amongst the German weaponry left behind on the territory of Czechoslovakia after the Second World War were dozens of 10.5cm leichte Feldhaubitze 18/40 light field howitzers. Partially modified, many of these served in the Czechoslovak Army until the early 1950s under the designation vz. 18/40 N (where 'N' stood for German origin). Four such weapons – all painted in green overall – became the first heavy weapons delivered from Czechoslovakia to Israel in 1948–1949. (Artwork by David Bocquelet)

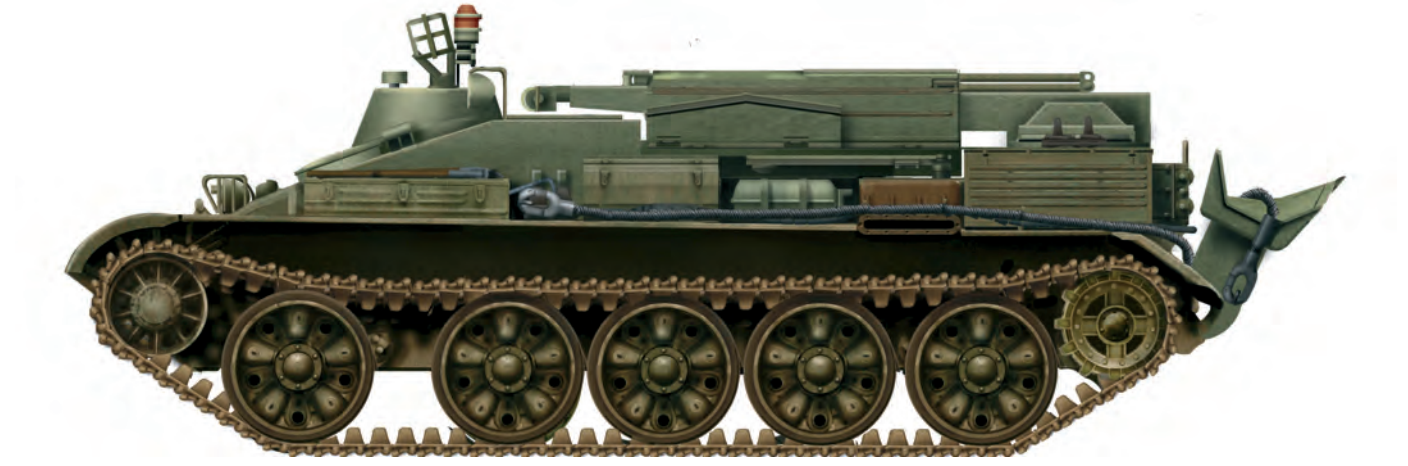
In the early 1950s, Czechoslovakia launched licence production of the Soviet SU-100 self-propelled gun under the designation SD-100: eventually 771 were manufactured by the ČKD Sokolovo Works in Prague (1953-1954), and by the Závody J. V. Stalina in Martin (1954-1957). A total of 125 was exported to Egypt in 1956, and at least a company saw deployment during the Suez War of the same year. Four of these – together with about 20 T-34/85 tanks, 50 old M4 Sherman tanks (all with diesel engines and eight with French-made FL-10 turrets), 41 British-made Archer tank destroyers, and 13 Valentine tanks (without guns) – were captured intact by the Israelis. On 5 July 1957, the Israeli Defence Force put six T-34/85s and two SD-100s – the reconstruction of one of which is shown here – on display during the Independence Day military parade in Tel Aviv. They were operated for ceremonial purposes only and never deployed in combat. (Artwork by David Bocquelet)



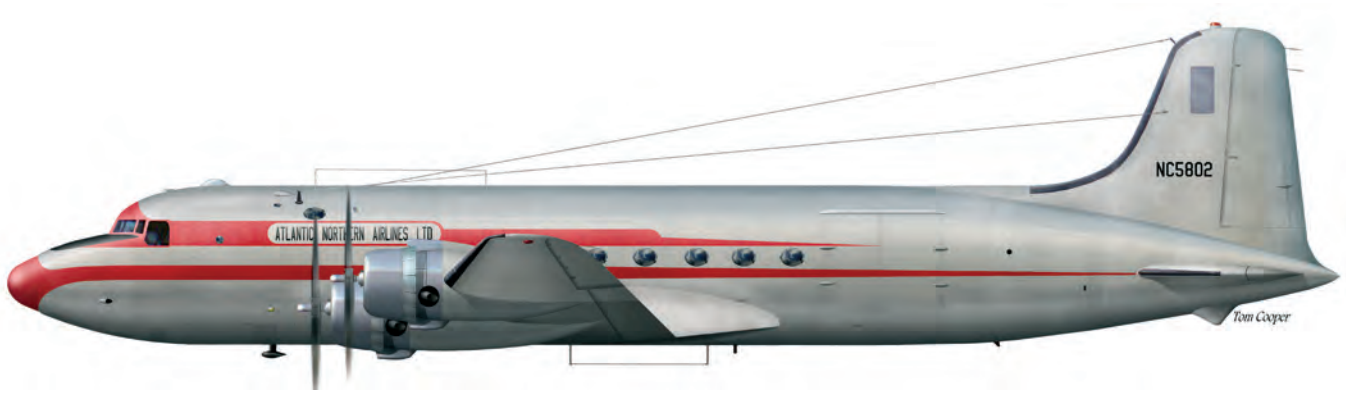
Over 800 Czechoslovak-made OT-62 TOPAS armoured personnel carriers were sold to Egypt between 1969 and 1972. Amongst others, during the opening phase of the October 1973 War, commando units of the Egyptian Army used them to cross the Bitter Lakes. Many were captured by the Israelis, however, who pressed them into service with their parachute units and various support formations. The example shown in the main artwork was captured during the final phase of the October 1973 War and pressed into service by Israeli paratroopers while still wearing its camouflage in sand and brown: eventually, it was knocked out during the ill-fated assault on Suez City. Insets show details of two other OT-62 TOPASs, both captured from Egypt. The inset in the left upper corner shows a vehicle used by the technical support service of an unknown armoured brigade, while the inset in the upper centre shows an OT-62 operated by an Israeli battalion equipped with MIM-23 HAWK surface-to-air missiles. (Artworks by David Bocquelet)

Following the October 1973 War, surviving OT-62s still in Israeli service were concentrated within units of the 265th, 691st and 889th brigades of the 440th Division, Israel Defense Force. They were all repainted in the IDF's UA902 Sandgrey overall and most received additional armament in the form of two US-made machine guns: Browning M1919A4 7.62mm calibre (shown left atop the casemate of this vehicle) and Browning M2 12.7mm. As far is known, they remained in operational service in Israel until at least 1979. (Artwork by David Bocquelet)

Turčianske strojárne manufactured no fewer than 7,197 T-55 and T-55A main battle tanks for the Czechoslovak People's Army and export. The reason for such a success was that the vehicles produced in Czechoslovakia enjoyed the reputation of being of much better quality and reliability than the Soviet originals. Over 900 were exported to Syria, which, starting in 1971, used them to form the backbone of tank battalions assigned to the mechanised infantry formations of its army. Hundreds were knocked out or captured intact by the Israelis, who reworked them to the standard locally designated the Tiran. While Tiran-1, -2 and -4, remained largely the same as the originals, Tiran-4Sh and Tiran-5Sh (shown here) were the first major upgrades. They included the installation of the 105mm main gun and the 12.7mm M2 heavy machine gun above it, a ring around the loader's hatch for a 7.62mm Browning M1919A4 machine gun, night vision equipment, air-conditioning system, new fire control and electrical systems, and additional stowage boxes on the rear of the turret and the hull. (Artwork by David Bocquelet)

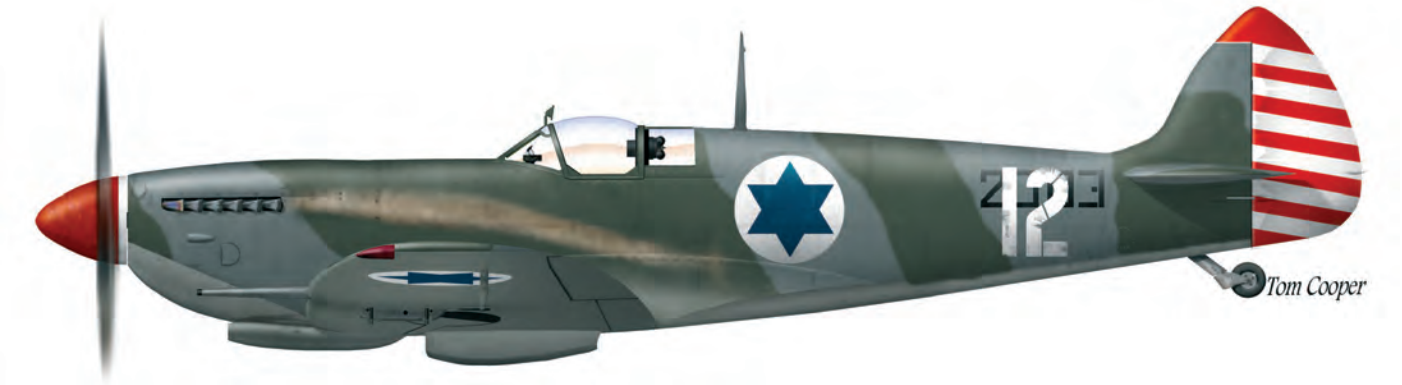


As well as tanks, Turčianske strojárne manufactured specialised vehicles based on the chasis of the T-55 main battle tank. Foremost amongst these was the VT-55 armoured recovery vehicle, over 350 of which were sold to Syria between 1971 and 1979, where one was assigned to the maintenance section of every tank battalion. Several were captured by Israel during the October 1973 War, and several combat support units of the Israel Defense Force were quick in pressing them into service. In similar fashion, one IDF unit operated a company's worth of T-55-based MT-55 armoured vehicle launched bridges (AVLBs) until these were replaced by US-made AVLBs based on the chassis of the M60 main battle tank. As far as is known, all of the Israeli-operated VT-55s and MT-55 were painted in Sandgrey overall, like other IDF-operated vehicles of the time. (Artwork by David Bocquelet)



Though not of Czechoslovak origin, two Douglas C-54 Skymaster transports played a crucial role in Operation Balak (in addition to 11 Curtiss C-46 Commandos and one Lockheed C-69 Constellation), hauling firearms, ammunition, spare parts, ground equipment and disassembled Avia S.199 fighters from Žatec to Ekron AB in Israel in May and June 1948. Officially registered to bogus airline companies – like Atlantic Northern Airlines Ltd. and Service Airways in the USA, and LAPSA in Panama – both Skymasters are known to have been left in bare metal overall livery: one example – registered as NC5802 – had cheat lines applied in red, as illustrated here; another C-54B wore one thick and two thin cheat lines applied either in red or blue, but its registration remains unknown. (Artwork by Tom Cooper)

Probably the most famous Czechoslovak arms export to Israel consisted of delivery of 24 Avia S.199 fighters, spare engines, ammunition and bombs in 1948. The S.199 was an interim variant equipped with the Junkers Jumo M.211 engine from the Heinkel He.111 bomber, which resulted in an aircraft with very poor handling qualities, especially on take-off and landing. The type was rushed into operational service with the nascent Israeli Air Force/Defence Force and, despite severe attrition, earned itself some fame in combat with fighters of the Royal Egyptian Air Force. They arrived in Israeli painted in grey-green (RAL6013, or 'Avia Green') overall, and retained this livery for the duration of their service. Notably, this example was equipped with a multiple ejector rack for four 70kg (155lbs) bombs under the centreline. (Artwork by Tom Cooper)



A Supermarine Spitfire LF.Mk IXE of the Czechoslovak Air Force, sold to Israel and delivered as part of Operation Velveta wore the standard RAF camouflage pattern in dark sea grey (BS381C/638; FS16187) and dark green (BS381C/641) on upper surfaces and sides, and medium sea grey (BS381C/637) on undersurfaces. They had their spinners painted in red, and the full ruder in the colours of No. 101 Squadron, Israeli Defence Force/Air Force: however, most received that unit's insignia only later on. All originally wore their full four-digit serials in the range 2000, but this was frequently overpainted by identification numbers – like 12 in this case – apparently applied in white, perhaps in yellow. (Artwork by Tom Cooper)

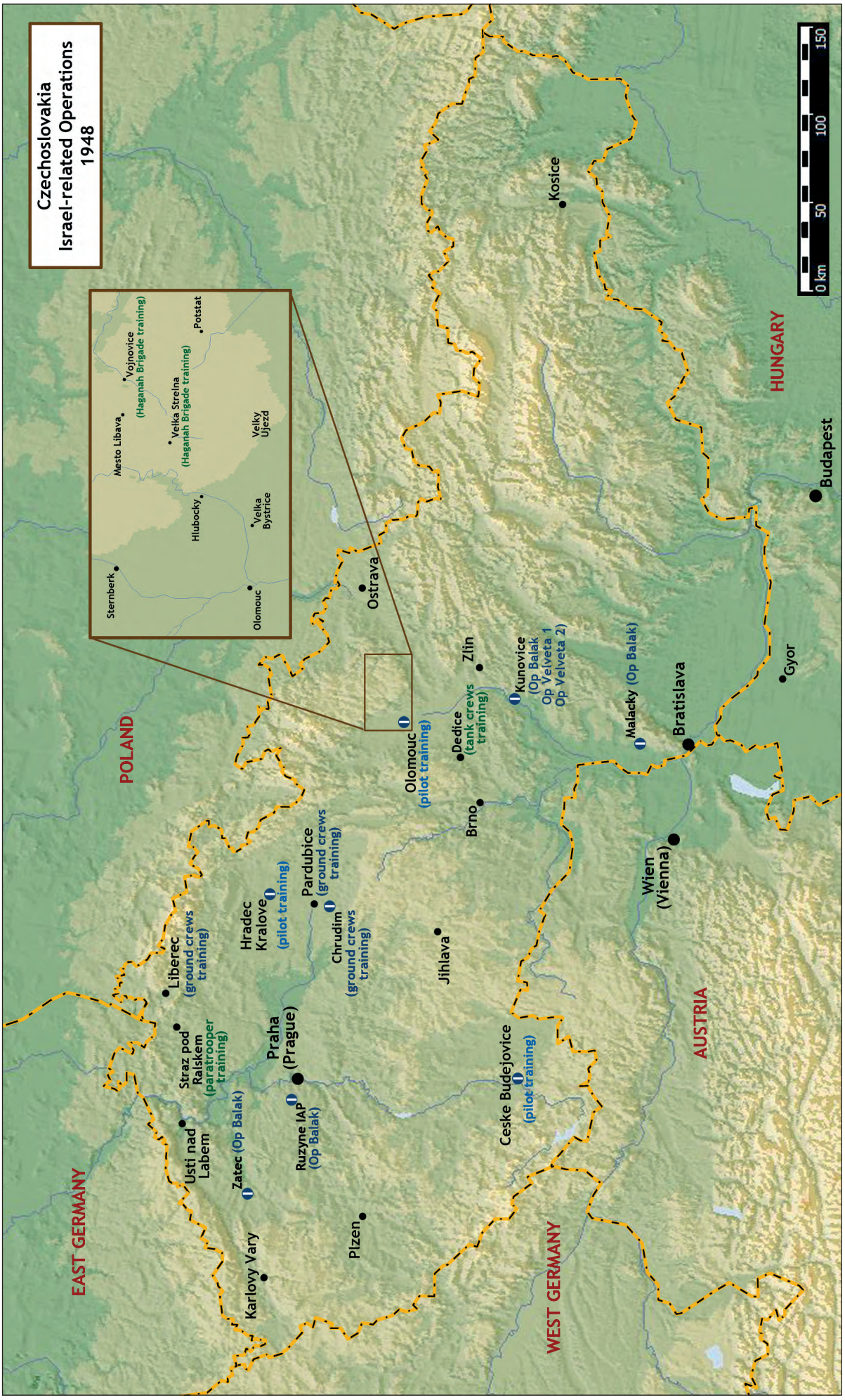

Czechoslovakia
Israel-related Operations
1948
POLAND
EAST GERMANY
WEST GERMANY
AUSTRIA
HUNGARY
Sternberk
Olomouc
Hlubocky
Velka Bystrice
Mesto Libava
Vojnovice
(Haganah Brigade training)
Velka Strelna
(Haganah Brigade training)
Velky Ujezd
Potstat
Karlovy Vary
Usti nad Labem
Zatec (Op Balak)
Straz pod Ralskem
(paratrooper training)
Liberec
(ground crews training)
Praha (Prague)
Ruzyne IAP (Op Balak)
Hradec Kralove
(pilot training)
Pardubice
(ground crews training)
Chrudim
(ground crews training)
Plzen
Jihlava
Olomouc
(pilot training)
Brno
Dedice
(tank crews training)
Zlin
Ostrava
Kunovice
(Op Balak
Op Velveta 1
Op Velveta 2)
Malacky (Op Balak)
Bratislava
Wien (Vienna)
Ceske Budejovice
(pilot training)
Kosice
Gyor
Budapest
0 km
50
100
150

TABLE 12: KNOWN CZECHOSLOVAK ARMS EXPORT TO LEBANON, 1948–74[87]

TYPE	NUMBER OF EXAMPLES	YEAR OF DELIVERY	NOTE
vz. 52/57, 7.62mm rifle	2	1972	from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army
vz. 58, 7.62mm assault rifle	1	1968	from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army
	300	1970	from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army
	10	1972	from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army
vz. 61, 7.65mm submachine gun	2	1968	from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army
	2	1970	from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army
7.65mm round	200	1968	from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army
vz. 43, 7.62mm round	500	1968	from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army
ammunition for small arms	1,000,000	1970	from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army
	1,000	1971	from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army
	5,002,200	1972	newly manufactured
	8,500,000	1974	newly manufactured
Helmet	40,000	1970	from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army

to 8.5 million rounds of ammunition. The required amount of Czechoslovak rounds was delivered to Lebanon in 1974.[84]

In the summer of 1975, the leadership of the Lebanese Communist Party asked the ÚV KSČ to supply 150 pistols with ammunition free of charge for the personal protection of its members. In August that year, 100 vz. 27 pistols, 50 vz. 50 pistols and 7,500 rounds of 7.65mm ammunition were released from the inventory of the Federal Ministry of National Defence. In January 1976, the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced that it would provide their transportation through diplomatic channels through the Czechoslovak ambassador to Syria. However, the transport of pistols ran into complications, and even in August 1976, all weapons and ammunition were still in Czechoslovakia. It remains unknown if the delivery was ever carried out.[85]

Relations between Czechoslovakia and Lebanon were then significantly reduced as a result of the long Lebanese Civil War, which broke out in April 1975, with the Czechoslovak diplomatic presence in the country kept to the minimum necessary. The Czechoslovak embassy in Beirut was located near the line separating the opposing factions in the conflict, which led to it several times being targeted by artillery and mortar shells.[86]

QATAR

Following the end of Ottoman rule, Qatar became a British Protectorate in the early 20th century until gaining independence in September 1971. Czechoslovakia did not establish diplomatic relations with the emirate until after the fall of the communist regime, on 14 October 1990. Despite this, the supply of a limited number of Czechoslovak small arms took place in the late 1960s.[88]

In early April 1968, Jordanian businessman Munther Bilbeisi negotiated with HTS officials about the possible shipment of Czechoslovak arms, submitting a request for the supply of infantry and light anti-tank weapons worth 840,000 CSK. This military hardware was intended directly for the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Ahmad bin Ali Al Thani. The request was the subject of a meeting of a commission composed of representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of National Defence, the Ministry of the Interior and the HTS, which agreed on 4 April that the supply

TABLE 13: KNOWN CZECHOSLOVAK ARMS EXPORT TO QATAR, 1948–74[90]

TYPE	NUMBER OF EXAMPLES	YEAR OF DELIVERY	NOTE
vz. 52, 7.62mm pistol	1	1963	from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army
vz. 52, 7.62mm rifle	1	1963	from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army
vz. 52/57, 7.62mm rifle	10	1968	from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army
vz. 98 N, 7.92mm rifle	800	1968	from the stocks of the HTS
vz. 58, 7.62mm assault rifle	10	1967	from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army
	100	1968	from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army
vz. 61, 7.65mm submachine gun	10	1968	from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army
Sa 23, Sa 25 and Sa 015, 9mm submachine gun	20	1968	from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army, Sa 015 (Samopal 015) is designation OMNIPOL used for ČZ 247 submachine gun offered for export

TABLE 13: KNOWN CZECHOSLOVAK ARMS EXPORT TO QATAR, 1948–74[90]

TYPE	NUMBER OF EXAMPLES	YEAR OF DELIVERY	NOTE
Sa 24 and Sa 26, 7.62mm submachine gun	2	1963	from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army
vz. 52/57, 7.62mm machine gun	1	1968	from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army
vz. 26, 7.92mm machine gun	1	1968	from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army
vz. 43, 7.62mm round	1,120	1967	from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army
	100,000	1968	from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army
vz. 52, 7.62mm machine gun	1	1963	from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army
7.62mm rimfire round	1,200	1963	from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army
vz. 48, 9mm round	10,000	1968	from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army
vz. 47, 7.92mm round	167,000	1968	from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army
vz. 52, 7.62mm round	2,280	1963	from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army
P-27, light anti-tank weapon	25	1968	from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army
P-27 round	1,000	1968	from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army

could be made in line with the resolution of the Presidium ÚV KSČ from 21 July 1964. The extent of the delivery is detailed in Table 13.[89]

SAUDI ARABIA

The Czechoslovak honorary consulate functioned in Jeddah until 1951, when all Czechoslovak honorary consulates were dissolved. From the second half of the 1950s, Prague repeatedly tried to establish direct diplomatic and commercial relations with Riyadh. Since these activities met only a lukewarm reaction at best, Prague considered Saudi Arabia to be 'one of the main players in American imperialist policy' in the Middle East. Therefore, communist Czechoslovakia was never able to establish official diplomatic relations with Saudi Arabia.[91]

Generally speaking, Riyadh was not interested in closer contacts with Czechoslovakia – except for occasional requests for deliveries of arms. In March 1956, at the time of massive Czechoslovak-Egyptian arms deals, the Czechoslovak ambassador in Egypt, Arnošt Karpíšek, reported that the Saudi minister of defence had made a statement that Saudi Arabia did not yet intend to turn to the Soviet Bloc for buying weapons'. At the same time, he mentioned that 'he does not rule out the possibility that Saudi Arabia will negotiate with us for the supply of special materials through Egypt'. In the end, no such enterprise took place.[92]

In 1957, Saudi businessman A. Barrawi, a partner in the Tousson company, visited Prague and discussed possible deliveries of Czechoslovak weapons for Saudi Arabia. These talks were interrupted, but then restored in September 1960. However, Saudi Prime Minister Crown Prince Faisal was still against establishing contacts with communist Czechoslovakia. This attitude changed in December 1960, when the post of prime minister was held by King Saud. Consequently, A. Barrawi visited the Czechoslovak embassy in Beirut on 19 April 1961 and, stating there was 'the interest to comprehensively develop business relations', requested again the weapons that had been specified in the September 1960 talks. The HTS, wasting no time, dispatched two of its officials, Grégr and Fišera, to Saudi Arabia. The business trip took place between 15 and 20 June 1961, and the Czechoslovak embassy in Beirut subsequently reported back to Prague:

> The interest in weapons was confirmed by the representative of the king's court Anas Jassin. He said the king had instructed to request weapons at first in the United States of America, which were willing to supply only light weapons, then in Belgium, which refused to supply at all, and then in Czechoslovakia. Although the United Arab Republic's current relations with the countries of the socialist camp are negatively affecting Czechoslovakia's development potential with Saudi Arabia, it is agreed that Anas Jassin will send an expert mission to Prague with the participation of the company Arab East Trading led by Baraoui, brother-in-law of A. Jassin.

The next Czechoslovak representative visited Saudi Arabia in late July or early August 1961 and met the Saudi Minister of Defence, Muhammed bin Saud Al Saud, who requested 'catalogues and other data about our weapons'. He was then invited for an official visit to Czechoslovakia to establish direct contacts with Saudi government officials and possible negotiations with the HTS.[93]

Although the Saudi minister of defence reportedly expressed interest in the acquisition of small arms, air defence and coastal defence weapon systems, no deal materialised. Indeed, the first known delivery of Czechoslovak weapons took place in 1963, when more than 4,000 vz. 27 pistols with an overall value of 492,424 CSK were delivered to Saudi Arabia via the Austrian company Sarmitz – Wien.[94]

This took place even though Saudi Arabia was still not on the list of countries allowed for the export of Czechoslovak special materiel. Riyadh was added to the list thanks to a resolution of the Presidium ÚV KSČ on 28 April 1964, but only on the condition that 'it is certain that our supplies will not be misused to provoke possible provocations against Yemen or to disrupt certain positive tendencies within the League of Arab States'.[95]

The subsequent shipments of Czechoslovak arms to Saudi Arabia were limited to smaller amounts of infantry weapons with associated ammunition, as listed in Table 14.

TABLE 14: KNOWN CZECHOSLOVAK ARMS EXPORT TO SAUDI ARABIA, 1948–74[96]

TYPE	NUMBER OF EXAMPLES	YEAR OF DELIVERY	NOTE
vz. 27, 7.65mm pistol	4,203	1963	from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army
	1	1964	from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army
	850	1970	from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army
Sa 23 and Sa 25, 9mm submachine gun	2	1964	from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army
Sa 23, Sa 25 and Sa 015, 9mm submachine gun	15	1968	from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army, Sa 015 (Samopal 015) is the designation OMNIPOL used for ČZ 247 submachine gun offered for export
vz. 61, 7.65mm submachine gun	1	1964	from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army
vz. 24 and vz. 98 N, 7.92mm rifle	6,400	1964	from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army
	7,600	1968	vz. 98 N from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army
vz. 43 N, 7.92mm rifle	1	1964	from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's A'my
vz. 52, 7.62mm rifle	1	1964	from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army
vz. 58, 7.62mm assault rifle	350	1968	from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army
vz. 34 N, 7.92mm machine gun	1	1964	from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army
vz. 37, 7.92mm heavy machine gun	1	1964	from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army
7.65mm round	600	1964	from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army
	200,000	1967	from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army
	2,000	1968	from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army
vz. 43, 7.62mm round	200,000	1967	from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army
	100	1968	from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army
vz. 47, 7.92mm round	1,518,000	1964	from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army
	500,000	1968	from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army
vz. 48, 9mm round	300	1964	from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army
vz. 52, 7.62mm round	1,200	1964	from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army

TUNISIA

After being a French protectorate from 1881, Tunisia gained independence on 20 March 1956, with Habib Bourguiba becoming the prime minister of the Kingdom of Tunisia. In 1957, the country was declared a republic and he subsequently became Tunisia's first president.

Czechoslovak influence in Tunisia was hampered by France's very strong military and economic position. Tunisia clearly remained a pro-Western country and used its contacts with the Soviet Bloc only as a tool of pressure on the West. This was also the case with the very first Tunisian interest in the import of Czechoslovak weapons.[97]

On 28 January 1957, a Czechoslovak business representative in Tunis reported to Prague that Tunisian officials were interested in the acquisition of armament for Tunisian armed forces through the Djilani company. However, no deal materialised. The situation repeated itself a year later when, on 13 November 1958, President Bourguiba publicly threatened to challenge the hesitant Western policy on arms imports with supplies of military hardware from Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. Although in January 1959 the Politburo ÚV KSČ approved further negotiations with Tunisian officials in this matter, the issue was decided when the United States delivered 400 tonnes of light arms to Tunisia during the same month. Official diplomatic relations between Prague and Tunis were not established until 30 July 1959.[98]

At the end of 1960, the Czechoslovak business attaché received a request from the Industrielle du Grand Maghreb company to build a plant for the production of infantry weapons. Although Prague was prepared to submit an informative, non-binding offer, including technical assistance for the introduction of small arms (vz. 52 rifle, Sa 23 and Sa 25 submachine gun and vz. 52 machine gun) production in Tunisia, again no deal materialised. Discussions related to Czechoslovak participation in the establishment of a plant for the assembly of hunting weapons and production of small-calibre

ammunition were underway during 1962. In the end, however, the result was the same as before.[99]

In May 1961, the Tunisian topographic service requested the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for Czechoslovak participation in a tender for aerial photography of some 160,000 square kilometres (61,776 square miles) of Tunisia's territory. The only Czechoslovak authority that was able to carry out such a task was the Czechoslovak Air Force, which, however, did not have the necessary technical equipment and capacity. Therefore, the Tunisian demand received a negative response.[100]

The next round of Tunisian interest in the procurement of Czechoslovak armament came in August 1961, when Czechoslovak ambassador Bartůšek reported to Prague in a telegram:

> Leading Tunisian military officials turned to the Soviet business department with an informative question as to whether the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics would sell weapons to the Tunisian army. Soviet comrades replied that they did not trade with weapons normally and that a similar question needed to be made officially. A similar unofficial inquiry was made to our business department as well. We answered in a similar sense like the Soviets.[101]

This probing ended without any result, as did a request by the Tunisian state aviation administration from autumn 1961 for the training of 10 civilian passenger airplane pilots despite the readiness of the Czechoslovak Air Force to carry out such an undertaking.[102]

At the end of 1962, a personal meeting took place between the Tunisian minister of defence and a representative of the HTS, during which the Tunisians were handed the technical specifications of Czechoslovak military hardware which was available for export to Tunisia. These documents were supplemented by information on new weapons through the ambassador of Tunisia to Czechoslovakia, with whom the HTS maintained contacts. Despite these efforts, it was not until the beginning of June 1964 that the head of the Czechoslovak sales department in Tunis reported to Prague that the local authorities had expressed interest in the L-29 Delfin training aircraft. This matter followed the same course as all the previous ones – the Tunisians did not buy anything.[103]

TABLE 15: KNOWN CZECHOSLOVAK ARMS EXPORT TO TUNISIA, 1956–74[104]

TYPE	NUMBER OF EXAMPLES	YEAR OF DELIVERY	NOTE
vz. 48, 9mm round	960	1961	
vz. 52, 7.62mm round	300	1961	
CV č. 8, detonator	500,000	1964	

The first – and last – breakthrough came in the 1990s, when the Tunisian Air Force ordered military airplanes from the Czech Republic. Three L-410UVP-E20G Turbolet light transport aircraft were produced in 1994, while 12 L-59T Super Albatros light combat and training aircraft were delivered to Tunisia in 1995 and 1996.

TABLE 16: OVERVIEW OF L-410 TURBOLET AND L-59 SUPER ALBATROS AIRCRAFT DELIVERED TO TUNISIA, 1994–96[105]

YEAR	VARIANT	NUMBER OF EXAMPLES	NOTE
1994	L-410UVP-E20G	3	introduced into the inventory of No. 12 Squadron
1995	L-59T	6	introduced into the inventory of No. 16 Squadron
1996	L-59T	6	introduced into the inventory of No. 16 Squadron, delivery included TL-59T simulator

THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

This absolute monarchy is a federation of seven emirates, consisting of Abu Dhabi (which serves as the capital), Ajman, Dubai, Fujairah, Ras Al Khaimah, Sharjah and Umm Al Quwain, which became independent from Britain in December 1971. The Soviet Union established official diplomatic relations with the Emirates only in November 1985, Czechoslovakia following their lead almost three years later on 1 June 1988.[106]

Nevertheless, the first known shipment of Czechoslovak special materiel – a small amount of 7.62mm ammunition for Abu Dhabi – took place in 1967. More important, albeit relatively small again, were deliveries of infantry weapons with associated ammunition for Dubai during the first half of the 1970s (see Table 17).

TABLE 17: KNOWN CZECHOSLOVAK ARMS EXPORT TO THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES, 1948–74[107]

TYPE	NUMBER OF EXAMPLES	YEAR OF DELIVERY	NOTE
vz. 58, 7.62mm assault rifle	100	1972	for Dubai, from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army
	100	1973	for Dubai, from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army
	100	1974	for Dubai, from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army
vz. 61, 7.65mm submachine gun	2	1973	for Dubai, from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army
vz. 43, 7.62mm round	5,000	1967	for Abu Dhabi, from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army

TYPE	NUMBER OF EXAMPLES	YEAR OF DELIVERY	NOTE
ammunition for small arms	200,000	1972	for Dubai, from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army
	101,000	1973	for Dubai, from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army
	200,000	1974	for Dubai, from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army

PALESTINIAN FACTIONS

Communist Czechoslovakia maintained relations with the Palestinian exile movement represented by the confederated multi-party Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), which was founded by the Arab League in June 1964 with the goal of the liberation of Palestine through armed struggle. Therefore, it was no surprise that Prague became a regular recipient of numerous Palestinian requests for deliveries of arms.

In June 1965, during the stay of Czechoslovak military and HTS representatives in Kuwait (see above), they were asked about the possibility of delivering infantry weapons for Fatah, the largest faction within the PLO, co-founded by Yasser Arafat in 1959. This apparently met with no reaction in Prague.[108]

On 20 August 1965, the Czechoslovak ambassador to Beirut announced that the then chairman of the PLO, Ahmad Shukeiri, had informed him of his intention to visit several communist states, including Czechoslovakia, to discuss the provision of military training and arms supplies to the PLO. However, establishing official contacts with the PLO was considered a sensitive political issue by the Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Czechoslovak ambassador in Lebanon therefore consulted on the matter with his Soviet counterpart, who eventually discussed the issue directly in Moscow. The Czechoslovak dilemma was finally resolved by the Soviets, who did not yet consider such a visit appropriate. That ended the matter.[109]

During the 1970s, the PLO was effectively an umbrella group of eight organisations headquartered in Damascus and Beirut, all devoted to armed struggle against Israel. Although the Czechoslovak embassy in Beirut had been officially authorised to liaise with the PLO and its factions since the mid-1970s, the main Czechoslovak institution for contact with the Palestinians was in fact the StB secret police. The chairman of the PLO, Yasser Arafat, visited Czechoslovakia in May 1975. At the end of his stay, he was given a symbolic gift – a model of a T-55 tank with a dedication. Yet this did not help him much in the armed struggle against Israel, so a month later he had to request supplies of ammunition from the executive of the Czechoslovak embassy in Beirut (and at the same time an StB operative), Václav Smíšek. Still unsatisfied, Arafat then asked directly the ÚV KSČ secretary for foreign policy and ideology, Vasil Biľak, for urgent delivery of 500,000 7.62mm rounds. The ammunition, packed in 428 boxes containing 479,360 vz. 43 rounds from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army, was delivered to Prague-Ruzyně international airport on Sunday, 6 July 1975 at 9:00 p.m. The boxes were immediately loaded into an Il-18 passenger airplane, which departed for Beirut at 10:30 p.m. the same night.[110]

During a visit to Czechoslovakia in late 1977 or early 1978, Abu Saleh, commander of al-Assifa (the military wing of Fatah), requested free delivery of military uniforms, boots, underwear, rucksacks and tents. Due to there being no surplus of this equipment in military warehouses, however, no delivery took place. Nevertheless, between 1976 and 1980, Czechoslovakia provided the PLO with medicines, blankets, shoes and food worth 6 million CSK. During the same time frame, 53 Palestinian fighters underwent treatment in Czechoslovak medical facilities. As a result of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon (Operation Peace for Galilee) in 1982, the PLO was provided with additional Czechoslovak support worth 4 million CSK, and a further 50 wounded Palestinians went to Czechoslovakia for medical treatment.[111]

As well as Fatah, Czechoslovak officials maintained contacts with the second and third largest Palestinian organisations – the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP). The leader of the former, radical left-wing militant and communist organisation, George Habash, underwent medical treatment in Czechoslovakia in late 1980 and in March 1983. The general secretary of the latter, also communist, movement, Nayef Hawatmeh, used Czechoslovak medical facilities in January and February 1983.

Although Czechoslovakia provided assistance to the PLO as a whole, PFLP and DFLP officials repeatedly complained that all aid from abroad was appropriated by Fatah. From the Czechoslovak point of view, however, it was more important that the material assistance provided for the PLO received appropriate publicity among Palestinians. Therefore, the Czechoslovak embassy in Beirut criticised the semi-secret handover of medicaments and medical supplies donated in December 1977 by the Czechoslovak Red Cross.[112]

While Prague developed political relations with the PLO during the 1970s, arms supplies lagged behind for a long time. A PLO military delegation led by Abu Jihad, the commander of Fatah's armed wing al-Assifa, arrived in Czechoslovakia in late January 1982 to reverse this situation and discuss the issue of Czechoslovak military aid. Indeed, Abu Jihad complained bitterly: 'In the military field, the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic does not yet support the PLO. No Palestinian has studied at Czechoslovak military schools, although this practice is common in other countries of the socialist community. They have not yet received a single cartridge from the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic.' He added:

> [T]he PLO wants to significantly deepen its relations with the national liberation movement all over the world and, as far as possible, provide assistance, similar to Nicaragua – where it supplied special materiel and where Palestinian pilots operate – or in El Salvador – where it is sending another significant delivery of special materiel via Cuba these days. The PLO knows that its assistance to the national liberation movement in Latin America is no secret and is not afraid of any consequences. It provides assistance by training specialists from Latin America and South Africa.

Jihad's visit obviously did not meet with much response, because in the first half of 1982 Czechoslovakia provided the PLO with only 1,000 vz. 61 submachine guns, which were paid for in cash by a representative of the PLO security service in Prague.[113]

The Israeli Operation Peace for Galilee in June 1982 escalated the Lebanese Civil War even further, which in July and August 1982 prompted the PLO, PFLP, DFLP and Lebanese Communist Party to

request the delivery of a smaller number of infantry weapons from Czechoslovakia. However, the First Secretary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and the President of Czechoslovakia, Gustáv Husák, most likely did not approve the provision of military assistance.[114]

In July 1985, the Czechoslovak cargo ship *Blaník* anchored at Aden harbour in the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen. The vessel brought not only weapons for the People's Militia of South Yemen (for details see the chapter on the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen in a later volume), but also a small amount of special materiel for the DFLP (see Table 18). Both consignments were provided free of charge. The delivery for the DFLP was handed over through the South Yemeni Ministry of Defence.[115]

Abu Jihad and his delegation visited Czechoslovakia again in 1986. On 24 February, they held negotiations with Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Stanislav Svoboda, First Deputy Minister of National Defence Colonel General Karel Rusov, Deputy Chief of General Staff Lieutenant General Milan Pavlíček and other officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Czechoslovak People's Army. At the beginning of the meeting, Abu Jihad informed the Czechoslovak representatives about the situation within the PLO since the Israeli invasion of Lebanon.

> Abu Jihad documented this by growing the number of both political resistance actions – demonstrations, strikes, rallies, etc. – and military ones. He stated that in 1983 300 political events took place in the occupied territory, in 1984 670, and last year it was already 790 events. In 1982, Palestinian fighters carried out a total of 180 military actions, the following year 351, in 1984 it was 466 and last year already 780 actions. In January of this year, 75 armed actions were carried out against the [Israeli] occupying forces.
>
> […]
>
> In the next part of his presentation, Abu Jihad focused on Palestinian–Czechoslovak relations, which he characterised as relations of friendship and cooperation. He expressed interest in bringing Palestinian–Czechoslovak relations to an even higher level. Due to the concentrated pressure on the PLO, he asked for political support to an even greater extent, especially in the Czechoslovak mass media. He stated that in other respects they also hope for a favourable development of cooperation, e.g. in the military field. In this context, he recalled his meeting with the minister of national defence of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic three years ago. He believes that the current meeting will open new perspectives for cooperation in the military field. The Palestinian representative requested assistance in the supply of special hardware, training and schooling of military personnel at the level of a general military or special technical academy – e.g. in the fields of infantry, artillery and technology. He noted that the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and other socialist countries provide assistance in the education of PLO personnel. They will specify this general requirement even further. To facilitate cooperation in this area, he applied for the consent of the Czechoslovak party to the accreditation of a military attaché at the Permanent Representation of the PLO in Prague.[116]

Apparently, the latest set of Abu Jihad's pleas for Czechoslovak weapons met with the same response as the ones from January 1982. Following an official visit of Yasser Arafat to Czechoslovakia in late June 1988, an official report for the Presidium ÚV KSČ stated: 'With the increase of Czechoslovak moral-political support and mutual cooperation with the PLO, it is recommended not to increase in the future, but to maintain at the current level the existing forms and volumes of Czechoslovak materiel and financial aid to the PLO.'[117]

TABLE 18: KNOWN CZECHOSLOVAK ARMS DELIVERIES FOR THE PLO, 1964–89[118]

TYPE	NUMBER OF EXAMPLES	YEAR OF DELIVERY	NOTE
vz. 43, 7.62mm round	479,360	1975	unconfirmed, from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army
7.62mm pistol round	100,000	1985	for the DFLP, delivered to the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen on board cargo ship *Blaník*
vz. 52, 7.62mm pistol	500	1985	for the DFLP, delivered to the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen on board cargo ship *Blaník*
vz. 61, 7.65mm submachine gun	1,000	1982	

1
ISRAEL (BAP, OPERATION DI)

Czechoslovak post-war leaders, especially President Edvard Beneš and Minister of Foreign Affairs Jan Masaryk, sympathised with the idea of restoring the Jewish state in Palestine. Hence, Czechoslovakia advocated the creation of an independent Jewish state as a member of the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP), which was created on 15 May 1947 in response to a United Kingdom government request to the United Nations General Assembly concerning the future government of Palestine. In September of that year, UNSCOP supported the termination of the British mandate in Palestine and recommended dividing the territory into two independent states or establishing one federal union with Jerusalem as its capital. While Jewish representatives accepted the former, the Arab side rejected both proposals. On 29 November 1947, the UN General Assembly adopted Resolution 181, based on the UNSCOP plan to create independent Arab and Jewish states and a Special International Regime for the city of Jerusalem.

Following this decision, the situation in Palestine quickly escalated into a civil war between the Jewish and Arab communities, while the British organised their withdrawal and intervened only on an occasional basis, With the Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel, on 15 May 1948, the ongoing war between the Arabs and Jews in Palestine widened as the forces of Egypt, Transjordan, Iraq, Lebanon and Syria invaded the newly created Jewish country, converting the conflict into the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. The United Kingdom and the United States imposed an arms embargo on

Klement Gottwald, communist Prime Minister of Czechoslovakia in 1948. (via Martin Smisek)

Jan Masaryk, Czechoslovak Minister of Foreign Affairs as of 1947-1948. (via Martin Smisek)

Bedřich Reicin, Czechoslovak Deputy Minister of National Defence in the late 1940s. (via Martin Smisek)

Palestine, which was accompanied by an arms embargo the UN imposed before the declaration of the state of Israel. Despite these measures, the British continued to supply weapons to Transjordan and Iraq, while Jewish forces smuggled arms mostly from Czechoslovakia through Hungary and Yugoslavia. Other important sources of illegal arms for Haganah (the main Jewish paramilitary organisation in Mandatory Palestine, which later became the core of the Israel Defense Forces, IDF) were Italy, France, Switzerland, Britain and the USA.[1]

NEW SOVIET PROXY

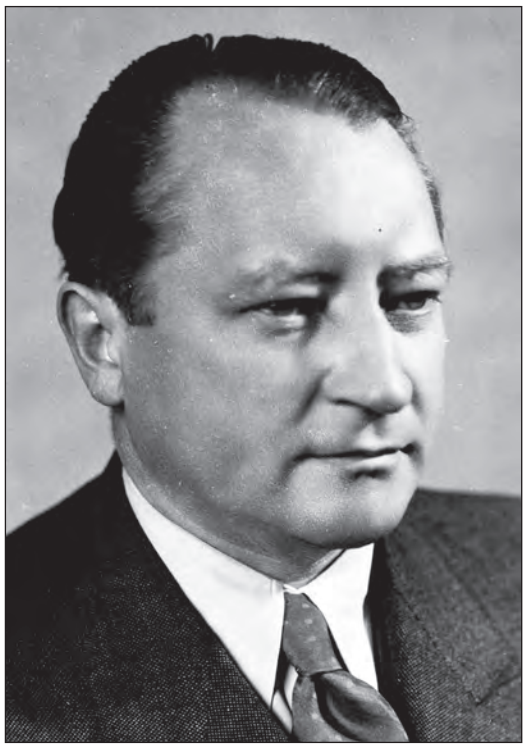
At that time, Czechoslovakia was still a nominally democratic state, even though the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (*Komunistická strana Československa*, KSČ) emerged victorious after parliamentary elections in May 1946. Representatives of the Central and Eastern European communist parties agreed on political and material assistance to Jewish forces at a meeting in Warsaw in August 1947. Although the Soviets refused to supply armament to Israel because of fear of negative reactions on the international scene, they supported Prague's arms exports to Israel and even intervened against Czechoslovak supplies of military hardware to Arab states. Czechoslovakia can thereby be seen as having acted as a proxy of Moscow for the first time.[2]

The attitude of Czechoslovak communists to the support for Israel was augmented by the fact that some of their top officials were Jews themselves, such as General Secretary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia Rudolf Slánský, the head of Czechoslovak military intelligence, the 5th Department (Defence Intelligence) of the Main Staff (*5. oddělení (obranného zpravodajství) hlavního štábu*) and later Deputy Minister of National Defence (and NKVD agent) Bedřich Reicin, and the Chief of the International Section of the Secretariat of the Czechoslovak Communist Party Bedřich Geminder. Ironically, in 1952, all three were sentenced to death during a show trial which was part of a Stalin-inspired purge of allegedly disloyal elements in Central European communist parties. Their support of Israel's cause, which was sanctioned by Moscow several years earlier, was quoted as one of their main offences.

FIRST WEAPONS FOR THE JEWISH STATE

Czechoslovakia recognised the independent Israel in May 1948, and both countries established official diplomatic relations on 3 July. Ehud Avriel (born Georg Überall) was accredited as the first Israeli ambassador to Czechoslovakia on 28 July that year. His most important task became purchasing arms for the Jewish community, an activity that was already in full swing, and with Avriel's full participation.[3]

Irgun, a Jewish paramilitary organisation that was viewed by the Czechoslovak communist secret police StB (*Státní bezpečnost*, the State Security) as a terrorist group, had been buying Czechoslovak weapons since 1946, and organised military training for a group of its members in the Tatra Mountains in Czechoslovakia in January 1948. The first contacts between representatives of Zionist organisations and Czechoslovak state officials related to arms procurement began in July 1947, when Moshe Sneh, head of the



Vladimír Clementis, the State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and one of the first Czechoslovak authorities to agree to sell arms to Israel. (via Martin Smisek)

political department of the Jewish Agency in Europe, raised the issue with the State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Vladimír Clementis and received his agreement in principle. This decision was supported by confirmation from Moscow. In spring 1947, Czechoslovak state representatives officially asked the Soviet government whether it objected to the production or delivery of Czechoslovak weapons to foreign countries. The Soviets gave an affirmative reply on 7 June, with the exception of 'political obstacles' such as fascist Spain or areas affected by the armed insurgency.

Czechoslovak willingness to export armament to Israel in spite of embargos was not only politically motivated. Economic factors were possibly even more crucial, since Czechoslovak arms companies had lost their traditional Latin American markets after recent pressure from the United States. Most importantly, however, the economy of Czechoslovakia was in dire need of foreign currency, and Israeli representatives were ready to immediately pay US dollars or British pounds for mostly German Second World War weapons that were sold to them for excessive prices.[4]

Following negotiations by representatives of the Jewish Agency with Minister of Foreign Affairs Jan Masaryk in November 1947, initial contacts of Jewish emissaries Ehud Avriel and Otto Felix (Uriel Doron) with Czechoslovak arms companies, the Ministry of National Defence and Ministry of Foreign Affairs began in earnest. The most important business contact for Jewish representatives became the specially created Secretariat D of Československé závody kovodělné a strojírenské, which was the overarching enterprise for Czechoslovak state-owned metalworking and mechanical engineering plants, including arms companies Zbrojovka Brno and Škodovy závody Plzeň. After the nationalisation of Czechoslovak foreign trade, deals were arranged through foreign trading companies KOVO and OMNIPOL. The initial arms shipments for the Jewish Agency received the Czechoslovak cover name BAP.

The first delivery of weapons for Jewish forces in Mandatory Palestine was approved by the Ministry of National Defence on 13 January 1948, and the corresponding deal worth US$746,129 was concluded the next day. The supply comprised 4,500 P-18 rifles (local designation of German Karabiner 98ks manufactured at Zbrojovka Brno from 1943), 200 MG 34 machine guns and 5,040,000 rounds of 7.92mm ammunition for both weapons. For reasons of secrecy, the recipient of the shipment was officially quoted as Ethiopia. The State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Vladimír Clementis, personally intervened with his Yugoslav counterpart in order to get immediate transit approval for Ehud Avriel. The weapons were loaded in Bratislava and sent over the Danube to Yugoslavia and then by train to the embarkation port of Šibenik in today's Croatia. Due to poor coordination on the Israeli side, the loading of arms on board the *Nora* began only in March. The ship, with an Italian crew, managed to break the British blockade and brought its cargo to the port of Tel Aviv on 1 April. The *Nora* arrived just in time to provide much-needed arms for Operation Nachshon, which, lasting from 5–16 April 1948, lifted the siege of Jerusalem by opening the Tel Aviv–Jerusalem road blockaded by Palestinian Arabs, marking one of the turning points of the 1948 Arab-Israeli War.[5]

THE SINKING OF SS *LINO*

However, Israeli forces were not alone in their acute need for weapons. Czechoslovakia was a traditional supplier of arms to the Middle East, and this practice continued after the Second World War, although initially on a very limited scope. The first negotiations with Arab customers related to arms export began only in 1947 and resulted in just two agreements. The first one covered the supply of optical equipment to Lebanon for only 1.126 million CSK. However, the other deal was financially more interesting. On 23 November 1947, Syrian representatives signed a contract with Zbrojovka Brno for the supply of weapons for the Arab Liberation Army, the military formation of mainly Syrian, Lebanese and Palestinian volunteers that fought on the Arab side. The deal stipulated delivery of 10,000 P-18 rifles, 1,000 ZK 383 submachine guns, 500 MG 34 machine guns and 11.5 million rounds of related ammunition. The first batch of 8,000 P-18 rifles with 6 million rounds of 7.92mm ammunition, to the value of some 40 million CSK, was dispatched for embarkation on board the ancient Italian liner SS *Lino* at the port of Rijeka in Yugoslavia on 7 January 1948 (the delivery of the remaining arms from this contract was later cancelled).[6]

However, Jewish representatives got wind of the operation and, during early January, Otto Felix intervened in order to stop the shipment and persuade Czechoslovak officials that cooperation with the Israelis could be more lucrative. Prague, after considering potential prospects, decided to side with the Jewish cause. Correspondingly, on 13 January, the Ministry of National Defence ordered Czechoslovak arms companies to stop negotiations related to additional deliveries of military materiel to Syria. In the case of arms business with other Arab states, Prague opted for delaying tactics, and contracts already concluded with them were fulfilled. This was also true for the cargo on board SS *Lino*.[7]

Top Jewish officials now decided to prevent the weapons from reaching Syria at all costs. Since their forces were in possession of just 10,073 rifles at that time, the arrival of SS *Lino* could have created a game-changing situation. Due to technical failure and in order to take on food, the ship anchored at Molfetta in southern Italy on the evening of 2 April. During that night, Italian customs officials noted suspicious movement on its deck, and higher authorities ordered the vessel to be detained. Subsequently, the ship's crew was arrested and SS *Lino* was towed to the military harbour at Bari. Although the skipper was able to quickly explain the affair, it was too late, as on 11

April, an elite Israeli team of Palmach saboteurs sank the ship while still anchored in Bari.

The Syrians did not give up, and, with Italian help, salvaged the ship's cargo, which was thoroughly cleaned and temporarily stored in a local warehouse. In the meantime, they bought another old Italian vessel, SS *Argiro*, to take the salvaged arms to Syria. However, two agents of Mossad – the Israeli intelligence agency – were infiltrated into the vessel's crew. After the loading of the arms, the *Argiro* set sail for the open sea on 19 August. However, 'accidentally', the ship developed engine problems, 'by pure accident', a nearby fishing vessel offered assistance. Two 'fishermen' who boarded SS *Argiro* were in fact also Mossad operatives. In a short time, all four Israeli agents overpowered the Italian crew and took control of the ship. On 24 August, near Haifa, the SS *Argiro* was met by two Israeli corvettes, INS *Wedgwood* (K-18) and INS *Haganah* (K-20). The men and the cargo were transferred to the Israeli military vessels, and the SS *Argiro* was sunk. The arms arrived just in time for the Israeli Etzioni Brigade to use them in combat.

THE BEGINNING OF THE AIRBRIDGE

The initial planning for the delivery of arms to Haganah was made amid a difficult search for swift and secure ways to keep these transports as secret as possible. The initial experience had shown that routes through Western Europe were long and politically very problematic. Shipments through Romania, Yugoslavia or Poland had not as yet been negotiated. The Jewish Agency therefore quickly created conditions for the air transport of weapons from Czechoslovakia to Palestine, and the resulting airbridge received the codename Operation Balak.

The first flight (Balak 1) took place on 31 March 1948 from Ruzyně international airport near Prague. A C-54B Skymaster with a crew from Ocean Trade Airways, a chartered airline based in Panama, was loaded with 7 tonnes of arms and ammunition in 130 crates, and declared as tools. The transport aircraft flew directly to an abandoned British emergency landing strip in the Arab village of Beit Daras near Be'er Tuvia, landing there around midnight. The military hardware it carried (200 P-18 rifles, 40 MG 34 machine guns and 150,000 rounds of ammunition) was handed over straight away to the troops deployed for Operation Nachshon, marking the first successful delivery of Czechoslovak arms to Haganah in Palestine.

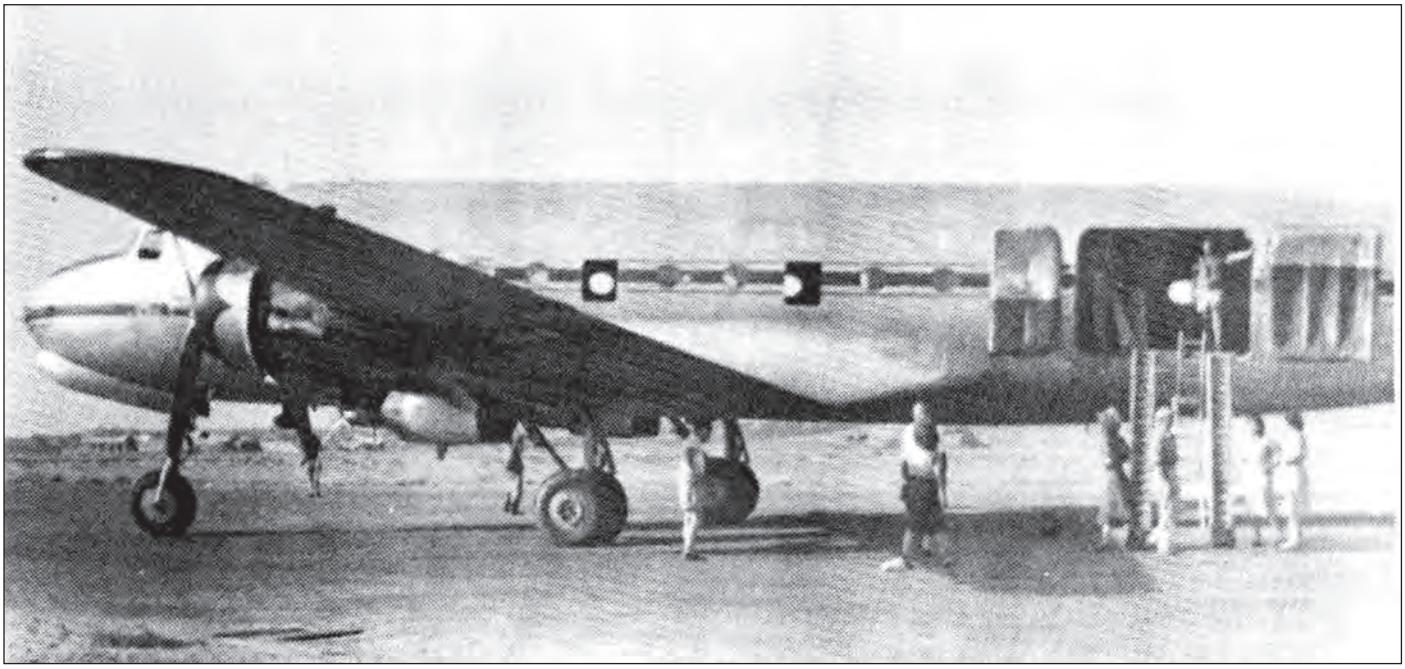
However, the flight immediately attracted the attention of the US and British embassies in Prague. On 2 April, the Skymaster returned to Ruzyně and, some 45 minutes after landing, its American crew members were summoned to the US Embassy in Prague. After their interrogation showed that the cargo was not intended for communist partisans in Greece, the airmen were released. The British Embassy was more interested in the remaining crew member – a British national. He was asked via the airport's public address system to go to a designated place. Meanwhile, all the entrances to the airport were guarded by British diplomatic officials. Nevertheless, with the help of Czechoslovak security authorities, the British airman managed to leave the airport undetected and returned to Britain.

However, it was now abundantly clear that additional flights from Ruzyně were completely unsustainable. Moreover, under pressure from US authorities, Ocean Trade Airways refused to execute further flights from Czechoslovakia. It was therefore necessary to find an airport that was ideally outside public reach, but at the same time equipped with the necessary facilities for operations of large transport aircraft – i.e. to have a sufficiently long concrete runway.[8]

ŽATEC AIRLIFT

The search by Czechoslovak authorities for a replacement base for the airbridge was a straightforward one. Apart from Ruzyně, there was only one suitable airport with a proper runway at that time – Žatec, located some 65km northwest of Prague. This was apparently the sole benefit of the location, since only primitive single-storey wooden houses were used for storage and accommodation there, with only one metal hangar at the beginning of the runway. The decision to use Žatec for air transport of arms to Jewish forces in Palestine was made by the Czechoslovak Minister of National Defence, Army General Ludvík Svoboda and approved by Prime Minister Klement Gottwald in early May 1948. The location received the Hebrew cover name Etzion.

Meanwhile, Jewish agents in the United States were busy acquiring surplus military transport airplanes. In total, two Douglas C-54 Skymasters, 11 Curtiss C-46 Commandos and one C-69 Constellation were flown from the United States. In order to



A Douglas C-54B involved in the airlift of Czechoslovak arms to Israel, seen in the process of being unloaded. (IDF)

smuggle them out, the aircraft were registered under bogus airline companies such as Service Airways in the USA and LAPSA (Lineas Aereas de Panama) in Panama. Subsequently, one Skymaster, the sole Constellation and nine Commandos were assigned to the Air Transport Command and constituted the backbone of the forthcoming air bridge. However, the great distance between Czechoslovakia and Israel created another problem. On a nonstop flight, the amount of military hardware carried by C-46 Commandos would be too limited. In an effort to reduce this disadvantage, Jewish representatives were able to secure the support of France, which provided the airfield for a stopover. The transport aircraft could thus fly to Israel via Ajaccio in Corsica, where they would refuel. In turn, this greatly prolonged the mission.

The first flight of the Žatec airlift took place several days later after the top Czechoslovak authorities gave their approval for the enterprise. Taking off under the codename Balak 2, a C-54 Skymaster landed at Ekron with Czechoslovak firearms on 12 May. Ekron (the former RAF Aqir, from 1950 known under the name Tel Nof) was not only a multi-runway airport that could support operations of large transport aircraft, but its location in the centre of the country meant that it was close to the vital front lines. The exercise was repeated two days later as Balak 3. This time, the Skymaster was loaded with ZB-37 machine guns, sabotage equipment and spare parts. The top priority of Operation Balak was given to the transport of the S.199 fighters to Israel. This was the task of Balak 5, in which a C-54 Skymaster departed Žatec on 20 May with a dismantled S.199 as cargo, together with ammunition, spare parts and two passengers – pilots Modi Alon and Ezer Weizman (future commander of the Israeli Air Force and President of Israel), who had recently graduated from hastily organised conversion training.

The airlift accelerated with the arrival of Curtiss C-46 Commandos that subsequently carried the burden of the operation. The flights quickly adopted a routine. The fully loaded transport aircraft usually took off before noon, and after the stopover at Ajaccio continued to Israel, where it landed close to midnight under the cover of darkness. Then, the airplane was unloaded, refuelled, serviced and, with a fresh crew, returned to Žatec before dawn. The night landings and take-offs at Ekron were of vital importance because of Egyptian fighters roaming over Israel during daylight hours. After the landing of the aircraft in Czechoslovakia, the crew's passports were taken away by local security officials (originally by StB members from the office at Most, later by SNB – *Sbor národní bezpečnosti*, the National Security Corps – officers deployed directly in Žatec air base). Subsequently, the aircrew went to the Hotel Stalingrad, located in the city centre of Žatec, where accommodation for personnel and the headquarters of the airlift was situated. The hotels Zlatý anděl and Zlatý lev were also used for the housing of airmen and maintenance personnel. The crews stayed there overnight or for several days, depending on the weather conditions and their suitability for flight operations.

On 24 May 1948, the Czechoslovak Air Force established an auxiliary aviation centre in Žatec that served as a personnel and logistics reinforcement for the existing air base administration. Thanks to this measure, the extraordinary tasks of the airbridge could be carried out without unnecessary delays or complications. The crews of the aircraft (pilots, navigators, radio operators and engineers) were Americans, Poles, Germans, French, South Africans and British. The maintenance personnel arrived at the air base by bus at 8:00 a.m., drove for lunch at noon and returned at 1:00 p.m. The mechanics drove back to their quarters after 5:00 p.m. The number of aircraft technicians at Žatec usually ranged between 20 and 50. The presence of a relatively large number of foreigners with a large amount of foreign currency quickly created many problems. It was only a short time before Žatec became a hub of Czechoslovak prostitution, with venereal disease cases skyrocketing. The supposedly top secret operation had become public knowledge.[9]

THE CLOSURE OF ETZION

On 15 July, Swedish newspaper *Stockholm Tidningen* published a sensational report about secret Israeli operations under the headline 'The Air Force of Israel has Bases behind Iron Curtain'. Unwanted media publicity was one thing, but the attention of US diplomatic officials in Prague was a completely different matter. On 8 July, the US Embassy had sent a note to the Czechoslovak authorities with a request for information about 'three aircraft from Miami which illegally left the USA and participated in the smuggling of arms'. Then, in a note dated July 28, Prague was asked to allow US Embassy officials to revoke the passports of US crew members and transport them back to the United States.

However, the interest of the American officials was not limited to the sending of diplomatic notes. Embassy representatives Thomas Donovan and Ralph S. Saul travelled by car to Žatec to find out more details about the ongoing airlift. Their identity cards were checked by an SNB patrol in the city square, and both Americans were taken to the station, but they were released shortly thereafter. They quoted 'recreation' as the reason for their visit. However, no accommodation was provided for them, upon SNB intervention. Both the American officials visited the Hotel Stalingrad and took interest in some US citizens there, saying that their relatives were worried about them. They also found several American aircraft mechanics and wanted to know details about their work and where they were flying to. Moreover, they advised all Americans that their registration at the US Embassy was in their own best interest, given the current tensions between the West and the East (the Soviet blockade of Berlin was in full swing at the time). Indeed, several aircraft technicians did then visit the US Embassy in Prague. Thanks to this step, US diplomatic and military officials were able to get quite detailed information about the Žatec airbridge.

Subsequently, with US diplomatic pressure upon Czechoslovakia reaching unbearable proportions, the Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs had no other option than to capitulate. Hence, on 10 August, it ordered the Ministry of National Defence to immediately stop the Žatec airlift, with the condition that all transport aircraft were to depart the base by 11 August and that all personnel in Israeli service must leave Czechoslovakia. US diplomatic activities pressured not only Czechoslovakia but also France, with Paris ordering Ajaccio to be closed to Israeli aircraft. Operation Balak ended officially on 12 August. Until that time, the Air Transport Command had completed 95 flights, carrying 24 S.199 fighters to Israel and more than 300 tonnes of firearms and related ammunition.

The abrupt end of the Žatec airlift meant that makeshift warehouses at the air base still contained some six railway cars of ammunition and a further four railway cars of aircraft equipment and armament. These items were later loaded on trucks and transported to other shipment centres. Still, on 15 August, one transport airplane with a US crew landed at Žatec, the airmen not realising that the airlift had already been terminated. The aircraft departed two days later with the remaining maintenance personnel on board. Another Israeli transport aircraft carrying 44 passengers landed at Žatec air base on 25 August and was loaded up with a cargo containing, among other items, 40,000 fuses.

Despite the end of the Žatec airlift, air transport of Czechoslovak war materiel to Israel continued – to a limited extent – from the

airfields at Malacky and Kunovice. Previous information leakage led not only to personnel changes (the removal of the Žatec air base commander), but also to stricter security measures at other air bases – Israeli pilots and technicians were now under constant surveillance by StB operatives. Nevertheless, an unknown amount of military materiel and persons were transported by DC-3 aircraft of Czechoslovak Airlines (*Československé aerolinie*), the only airline company that did not interrupt regular flights on the Prague–Rome–Athens–Lydda line during the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. Reportedly, the very last aerial transport of arms to Israel from Czechoslovakia took place at the beginning of 1949.[10]

'MESSERSCHMITTS'

Top representatives of the Jewish community in Palestine considered several options to obtain fighter aircraft. In late January 1948, the business representative of Czechoslovak company Československé závody kovodělné a strojírenské in Tel Aviv received an urgent request for the swift delivery of combat aircraft. Since the respective Czechoslovak manufacturers were not able to deliver the demanded airplanes in such a short period of time, the issue was discussed with officials of the Ministry of National Defence, who were asked if they would be willing to provide 12–25 Avia S.199 fighters and 27 Avia C-2 (Czechoslovak production version of the Arado Ar 96 B) advanced trainers, which were already ordered for the Czechoslovak Air Force, on condition that the provided aircraft were replaced with new-built ones sometime later. On 21 March, the commander of the Czechoslovak Air Force, General Alois Vicherek, approved the sale of the requested number of fighters, but only two C-2s.

At that time, just 12 S.199 fighters were in the service of Czechoslovak fighter aviation regiments. It was an interim fighter based on the airframe of the Messerschmitt Bf 109 G that was assembled on Czechoslovak territory in the later stages of the Second World War. Since a large stock of original Daimler-Benz DB 605 power plants was destroyed during a fire at a warehouse in Krásné Březno, it was decided to use the engine and propeller of the Heinkel He.111 bomber as a replacement. Therefore, the resulting 'bastard' fighter featured performance only similar to the Bf 109 E – of Battle of Britain fame – coupled with extremely poor handling qualities which made landing and take-off very hazardous.[11]

The first contract for the delivery of 10 S.199 fighters including associated equipment, with an overall value of a staggering US$1,798,480, was formally signed on 23 April 1948 (see Table 19). The Jewish Agency paid US$44,600 per aircraft, US$6,800 for armament per aircraft, US$6,690 for spare parts per aircraft and US$1,199,930 for ammunition for all airplanes. At the same time, a second contract for the delivery of 15 identically equipped S.199s with ammunition was confirmed. Originally, it was planned that the aircraft would be overflown to Israel via Italy and Greece. However, following the seizure of four Avro Ansons at Rhodes on 10 April, it became clear that repeating this scheme risked failure. Hence, the transport of S.199s to Palestine became the top priority of Operation Balak.

TABLE 19: FIRST CONTRACT FOR S.199 FIGHTER AIRCRAFT, APRIL 1948[12]

TYPE	NUMBER OF EXAMPLES	DATE OF DISPATCH	NOTE
S.199, fighter	10	20–31 May 1948	construction numbers 30, 32, 33, 36, 37, 38, 42, 282, 286 and 287; aircraft delivered including spare parts
M.211, piston engine	4		spare engines for S.199, Czechoslovak designation of German Jumo 211
13mm round	200,000		
20mm round	20,000		
70kg bomb	400		probably German SD 70 fragmentation bomb
500kg bomb	50		probably German SC 500 high explosive bomb
Signal rocket	300		
Parachutes	20	26 May 1948	different types

A row of Avia S.199s of the Czechoslovak Air Force seen during the training of Israeli pilots and ground crews in 1948. (Albert Grandolini Collection)

After the test flight from the factory airfield at Letňany near Prague, the airplanes were overflown to Žatec during early May 1948. There, after final flight tests, they were dismantled by a team of 22 factory technicians and loaded into transport aircraft. The very first S.199 was airlifted to Ekron air base inside a C-54B Skymaster under the cover name Balak 5. During the next day, 21 May, another S.199 with recently trained fighter pilots Eddie Cohen, Lou Lenart and Milton Rubenfeld was transported to Israel using two C-46 Commandos as Balak 6 and 7. While a C-54B managed to carry a complete S.199 aircraft, two C-46s were needed to transport one S.199 – the fuselage and propeller in one aircraft, and the wing and ammunition in the other.

TABLE 20: SECOND CONTRACT FOR S.199 FIGHTER AIRCRAFT, JUNE 1948[15]

TYPE	NUMBER OF EXAMPLES	DATE OF DISPATCH	NOTE
S.199, fighter	15	1–28 July 1948	construction numbers 63, 88, 89, 90, 91, 93, 94, 95, 96, 98, 100, 302, 307 and 310; the aircraft with construction number 63 was destroyed in a crash during the training of Israeli pilots in Czechoslovakia in August 1948
13mm round	750,000	August 1948	
20mm round	150,000	August 1948	
NSD1, 1kg bomblet	100,000	July–August 1948	probably German SD 1 light fragmentation bomb
NSD2, 2kg bomblet	100,000	July–August 1948	probably German SD 2 light anti-personnel bomb
OTLP vz. 34, 10kg aircraft bomb	3,000	July–August 1948	
OTLP vz. 34, 20kg aircraft bomb	150	July–August 1948	
70kg bomb	7,500	July–August 1948	probably German SD 70 fragmentation bomb
250kg bomb	750	July–August 1948	probably German SC 250 high explosive bomb

On 22 May, a C-54B left Žatec with a dismantled fighter and five factory technicians (Miroslav Rulc, František Smrček, Michal Vygiera, Jan Valášek and Vojtěch Kořenek), who hastily assembled the S.199s inside an ex-RAF hangar at Ekron (the Czechoslovak mechanics returned to Žatec in late June). They also trained local ground crews. The new fighters were inducted into the 101st Squadron, and a couple of days later they had their initial flight, which was simultaneously their first combat test. On 29 May, a formation of four S.199s led by Lou Lenart – together with Modi Alon, Ezer Weizman and Eddie Cohen – attacked a column of Egyptian forces advancing towards Tel Aviv. Cohen's plane was hit by ground fire, and the burning aircraft crashed with the pilot perishing in its remains. Upon touching down at Ekron, the brake on the left wheel of Alon's fighter failed, the aircraft ground-looped and its short career in the ranks of the 101st Squadron ended as wreckage. Although this attack inflicted only minor damage, it was one of the reasons that deterred the Egyptian Army from further advances north.

Between 20 May and 30 June, the Skymasters and Commandos of the Žatec airlift transported all 10 S.199 fighters from the initial contract to Ekron. However, not everything was running smoothly. During the Balak 11 night flight on 23/24 May, the C-46 Commando carrying the fourth dismantled Czechoslovak airplane crashed on a gentle slope south of Latrun. Moreover, the activity of Czechoslovak technicians in Israel was not without danger. On 1 June, a raid by Egyptian Spitfires damaged a pair of S.199s awaiting assembly in a hangar at Ekron. This action prompted the relocation of the 101st Squadron and its aircraft to a newly constructed air strip at Herzliya which had 2,000 meters (6,560ft) of unpaved runway.[13]

While S.199 fighters experienced their first taste of combat, representatives of the Jewish Agency were busy seeking new opportunities to obtain aircraft in Czechoslovakia. However, they soon ran into problems because the 6th Department (Materiel) of the General Staff (*6. oddělení (materiální) hlavního štábu*) in spite of previous confirmation, refused to provide 15 additional S.199s. Only the personal intervention of Czechoslovak business officials and Israeli emissary Otto Felix, who badgered Czechoslovak Air Force chief Alois Vicherek, got the decision reversed. The contract

TABLE 21: IMMEDIATE DELIVERY OF THE ARMAMENT FOR B-17G BOMBERS, 1948[16]

TYPE	NUMBER OF EXAMPLES	DATE OF DISPATCH	NOTE
250kg bomb	30	July 1948	probably German SC 250 high explosive bomb, delivery approved on 9 July 1948
500kg bomb	20	July 1948	probably German SC 500 high explosive bomb, delivery approved on 9 July 1948
AZ-80, mechanical fuse for aircraft bomb	200	July 1948	
aircraft oxygen apparatus	12		
vz. 131 N, 13mm machine gun	6		Czechoslovak designation of German MG 131
vz. 151 N, 20mm cannon	8		Czechoslovak designation of German MG 151

for their delivery including spare parts (but without ammunition), to the overall value of US$971,830, was signed on 21 June 1948. Upon a request from Zbrojovka Brno, the Ministry of National Defence changed its original opinion and approved the delivery of 13mm and 20mm rounds, together with old bomblets, for the Israeli fighter airplanes (see Table 20).

Like with the first batch, these Avia fighters were also transported to Israel dismantled on board C-54 Skymaster and C-46 Commando aircraft under Operation Balak. The first two fighters of this order arrived on 1 July. According to documentation of the Ministry of National Defence, Czechoslovakia delivered 24 S.199 airplanes for the Israeli Air Force. The 25th aircraft crashed during Operation DI – the training of Israeli pilots at Aviation Regiment 5 (*Letecký pluk 5*) in České Budějovice. The very last S.199 finally reached Israel only on 26 November, having remained in a C-46 aircraft that was impounded at Rome airport on 18 July.[14]

THE BOMBING OF CAIRO – FROM CZECHOSLOVAKIA

During the summer of 1948, the air base at Žatec served not only as the centre of the Israeli airbridge. Three B-17G Flying Fortress heavy bombers were smuggled out of the United States on 12 June, flown from Miami to Puerto Rico in the Caribbean. After an additional stopover at the Portuguese Azore Islands off the west coast of Africa and refuelling at Ajaccio on Corsica, the bombers headed behind the Iron Curtain, the first two Fortresses landing at Žatec air base on the evening of 14 June. However, just two days later, the smuggling operation was revealed by the press and, under pressure from the US Government, a fourth B-17G, after a flight through the United States and Canada, was seized by the Portuguese authorities in the Azores. The airplane never made it to Czechoslovakia or to Israel.

However, all three of the Israeli B-17Gs had been de-militarised after the Second World War. The gun turrets had been removed from the aircraft and the holes had been covered with plywood. Bombsights and hardpoints in the bomb bays were also dismounted. On 19 June, the chief of staff of the Israeli Air Force, Aharon Remez, ordered the trio of Flying Fortresses to be prepared for combat. Israeli representatives approached the KOVO-letecký prodej trading company with a request for assistance. Upon the urging of its business officials at the Ministry of National Defence, the Czechoslovak Air Force provided the necessary bombs and other equipment from its stocks of captured German armament for the re-militarisation of the Israeli B-17Gs (as listed in Table 21). At Žatec, the bombers were outfitted with their missing bomb pylons and defensive weapons. However, only one B-17G was equipped with a proper bombsight and oxygen system for high-altitude operations.

It was decided that on the ferry flight from Czechoslovakia to Israel, the bombers would carry out attacks on two targets in Egypt – the Abdeen Palace in Cairo and the air base at El-Arish, with Gaza as an alternative target. Three B-17Gs departed Žatec on the morning of 15 July. They flew south towards the Adriatic Sea and then along the coast of Yugoslavia, Albania and Greece. Near Crete, the lead bomber, the only one with the oxygen system and proper bombsight, set course to Cairo, while the remaining two Flying Fortresses heading towards the Royal Egyptian Air Force base at

TABLE 22: MARITIME TRANSPORT OF CZECHOSLOVAK ARMS TO ISRAEL, 1948–49[18]

DATE OF ARRIVAL IN ISRAEL	SHIP	CARGO	NOTE
1 April 1948	*Nora*	4,500 P-18 rifles 200 MG 34 machine guns 5,040,000 rounds of 7.92mm ammunition	
30 May 1948	*Rex*	10,000 P-18 rifles 1,364 MG 34 machine guns 10 75mm guns 5 20mm cannons 13 Hotchkiss heavy machine guns	P-18 rifles and MG 34 machine guns came from Czechoslovakia, remaining arms from France were loaded in Marseille before that
27 June 1948	*HaZaken*	10,000 P-18 rifles 2,200 MG 34 machine guns 1,100 ZB-37 machine guns some 35,000,000 rounds of ammunition	
9 July 1948	*Shiu*	10,000 bayonets 15,000,000 rounds of 7.92mm ammunition	
26 September 1948	*Rex*	27 20mm cannons with ammunition 20 tonnes of aircraft bombs 50 tonnes of TNT 19 power-generating sets	
19 December 1948	*Iris*	7.92mm ammunition 13mm and 20mm ammunition for S.199 fighters 8,500 different aircraft bombs	
18 February 1949	*Arsia*	11 Spitfire LF Mk IXE fighters 10,000 rounds of 20mm ammunition 7.92mm ammunition 10 power-generating sets	
19 February 1949	*Shiu*	6 Spitfire LF Mk IXE fighters 25lb and 100lb aircraft bombs 396 anti-personnel mines 10 power-generating sets	
23 March 1949	*Shiu*	5 Spitfire LF Mk IXE fighters 2 C-64A Norseman light transport aircraft	
23 March 1949	*Arsia*	9 Spitfire LF Mk IXE fighters	

El-Arish. The royal palace in the Egyptian capital was bombed, but due to difficulties in locating the pre-planned targets, the other two aircraft bombed Rafah instead. All three aircraft landed successfully at Ekron air base during the evening of 15 July.[17]

HEAVY WEAPONS FROM OLD STOCKS

In the meantime, the two Jewish emissaries in Czechoslovakia, Ehud Avriel and Otto Felix, were signing one infantry armament deal after another. The scope of the deliveries was so huge that, despite the airbridge, the weapons had to be transported by rail to the Yugoslav port of Šibenik. There, the consignments were loaded on board ships and delivered to Israel (see Table 22).

The demands of the Jewish Agency were not limited to infantry weapons, related ammunition and fighter aircraft. In early February 1948, Škodovy závody sent a request to the Ministry of National Defence for permission to present captured German field and mountain howitzers, anti-tank guns and mortars to Jewish officials. During subsequent months, similar requests were issued by additional Czechoslovak arms companies such as ČKD, Meopta and Česká zbrojovka. This development culminated on 2 June 1948, when Ehud Avriel and Otto Felix submitted an extensive list of requirements for delivery of military materiel, which included 150 tanks, 160 field guns with a calibre of 75mm or similar, 50 anti-tank guns, 100 Bofors anti-aircraft guns, 200 heavy machine guns, 200 flamethrowers, 30 Avia S.199 fighters, 30 Supermarine Spitfire Mk IX fighters, 10 de Havilland Mosquito fighter-bombers and four Handley Page Halifax heavy bombers. All tanks, guns and combat aircraft were requested with ammunition.

TABLE 23: KNOWN DELIVERIES OF INFANTRY WEAPONS AND AMMUNITION, 1948–49[21]

TYPE	NUMBER OF EXAMPLES	DATE OF DISPATCH	NOTE
ČZ 6,35, 6.35mm pistol	10		
ČZ 7,65, 7.65mm pistol	250	8 June 1948	
	250		
ZK 383, 9mm submachine gun	8	8 July 1948	
P-18, 7.92mm rifle	4,500	24 January 1948	Czechoslovak factory designation of German Karabiner 98k, transported on the ship Nora from Yugoslavia to Tel Aviv
	10,000	February–April 1948	dispatched from Zbrojovka Brno to Israel, transported by air from Ruzyně airport and by sea on the ship *Rex*
	6,000	4 June 1948	dispatched from Zbrojovka Brno to Israel, transported by air from Žatec air base
	2,000	17 May 1948	dispatched from Zbrojovka Brno
	2,000	31 May 1948	dispatched from Zbrojovka Brno
	10,000	27 August 1948	including vz. 24 bayonet, dispatched from Zbrojovka Brno to Israel,transported probably by air from Malacky air base
	7	July 1948	
MG 34, 7.92mm machine gun	200	24 January 1948	transported on the ship *Nora* from Yugoslavia to Tel Aviv
	1,415	February–April 1948	dispatched from Zbrojovka Brno to Israel, transported by air from Ruzyně airport and by sea on the ship *Rex*
	1,200	18 April 1948	dispatched from Zbrojovka Brno
	1,100	12 May 1948	dispatched from Zbrojovka Brno
	1,100	15 May 1948	dispatched from Zbrojovka Brno
	500	27 August 1948	dispatched from Zbrojovka Brno to Israel, transported probably by air from Malacky air base
ZK 420, 7.92mm rifle	10		dispatched from Zbrojovka Brno to Israel, transported probably by air from Malacky air base
ZK 382, 7.92mm anti-tank rifle	4	8 June 1948	
ZB-26, 7.92mm light machine gun	500		Czechoslovak military designation vz. 26, dispatched from Zbrojovka Brno to Israel, transported probably by air from Malacky air base
ZB-37, 7.92mm heavy machine gun	200	May 1948	Czechoslovak military designation vz. 37, with mount, dispatched from Zbrojovka Brno
	300	June 1948	with complete accessories (without optics)
	200	July 1948	with complete accessories (without optics)
	200	August 1948	with complete accessories (without optics)

TYPE	NUMBER OF EXAMPLES	DATE OF DISPATCH	NOTE
7.92mm round	5,040,000	24 January 1948	transported on the ship *Nora* from Yugoslavia to Tel Aviv
	8,000,000	February–April 1948	dispatched from Zbrojovka Brno to Israel, transported by air from Ruzyně airport and by sea on the ship *Rex*
	30,000,000	23 July 1948	dispatched from Zbrojovka Brno
	3,000,000	1 July 1948	
ammunition belt with 100 rounds for MG 34	10,000	16 December 1948	
9mm round Parabellum	1,000	8 June 1948	
	2,000	8 July 1948	
7.65mm round	250,000	8 June 1948	
	125,000		
6.35mm round	5,000		
vz. 24 bayonet	10,000	12 June 1948	for P-18 rifle, dispatched from Zbrojovka Brno

Upon an order from the Deputy Chief of the Main Staff, Corps General Šimon Drgáč, the respective departments of the Ministry of National Defence and the Czechoslovak Army (*Československá armáda*) prepared in just 12 hours a list of weapons available for possible export to Israel. To the displeasure of Israeli representatives, the number and type of the offered armament were quite limited: 10 LT-38/37 light tanks (Czechoslovak post-war military designation for LT vz. 38) with ammunition, 65 ST-I tank destroyers (Czechoslovak military designation of German Jagdpanzer 38(t)) with ammunition and 2,496 vz. 40 N (Flammenwerfer 40) flamethrowers. Then, during July 1948, the ČKD company discussed with Israeli representatives the possibility of selling 12 Stuart light tanks. In the end, no deal

TABLE 24: KNOWN DELIVERIES OF ARTILLERY ARMAMENT AND AMMUNITION, 1948–49[22]

TYPE	NUMBER OF EXAMPLES	DATE OF DISPATCH	NOTE
vz. 28 N, 50mm mortar	30	May 1949	probably mistaken designation, apparently vz. 36 N mortar
vz. 36 N, 50mm mortar	20	May 1949	including 5 spare barrels, Czechoslovak designation of German Granatwerfer 36
	18		unconfirmed
vz. 36, 81mm mortar	4	May 1949	
vz. 34 N, 80mm mortar	32		unconfirmed, Czechoslovak designation of German Granatwerfer 34
vz. 42 N, 120 mm mortar	16		unconfirmed, Czechoslovak designation of German Granatwerfer 42
vz. 28/J, 75mm mountain gun	12		unconfirmed
vz. 36 N, 75mm mountain gun	?		unconfirmed, Czechoslovak designation of 7.5cm Gebirgsgeschütz 36
vz. 16/19, 100mm howitzer	12		Unconfirmed
vz. 18/40 N, 105mm light howitzer	4	May 1949	Czechoslovak designation of German 10.5cm leichte Feldhaubitze 18/40
50mm mortar round	26,010		for vz. 36 N mortar
vz. 39/40, vz. 39/41 and vz. 39/42, 50mm mortar round	27,720		for vz. 28 N mortar
vz. 36, 81mm mortar round	4,911		for vz. 36 mortar, additional 897 rounds delivered without partial charges
DNG, 75mm impact round	5,459	22 September 1948	for vz. 36 N mountain gun
DČG, 75mm time-setting round	116		for vz. 36 N mountain gun
vz. 38 C, 75mm high explosive round	648		
DNG vz. 38 and DNG vz. 38 A1, 105mm round	1,636		for vz. 18/40 N howitzer, additional 176 rounds delivered without partial and booster charges
OČG, 105mm round	291		for vz. 18/40 N howitzer

TABLE 25: KNOWN DELIVERIES OF COMMUNICATION EQUIPMENT, 1948–49[23]

TYPE	NUMBER OF EXAMPLES	DATE OF DISPATCH	NOTE
vz. 30, telephone cable	400km in length	October 1948	delivered by Škodovy závody for 778,000 CSK
vz. 21, cable drum	800	October 1948	
vz. 21, cable spooler	50	October 1948	

materialised since Czechoslovak officials wanted to sell the tanks for prices that were almost twice as much as was usual in Western Europe at that time. Hence, Ehud Avriel and Otto Felix withdrew from the purchase on 19 July.

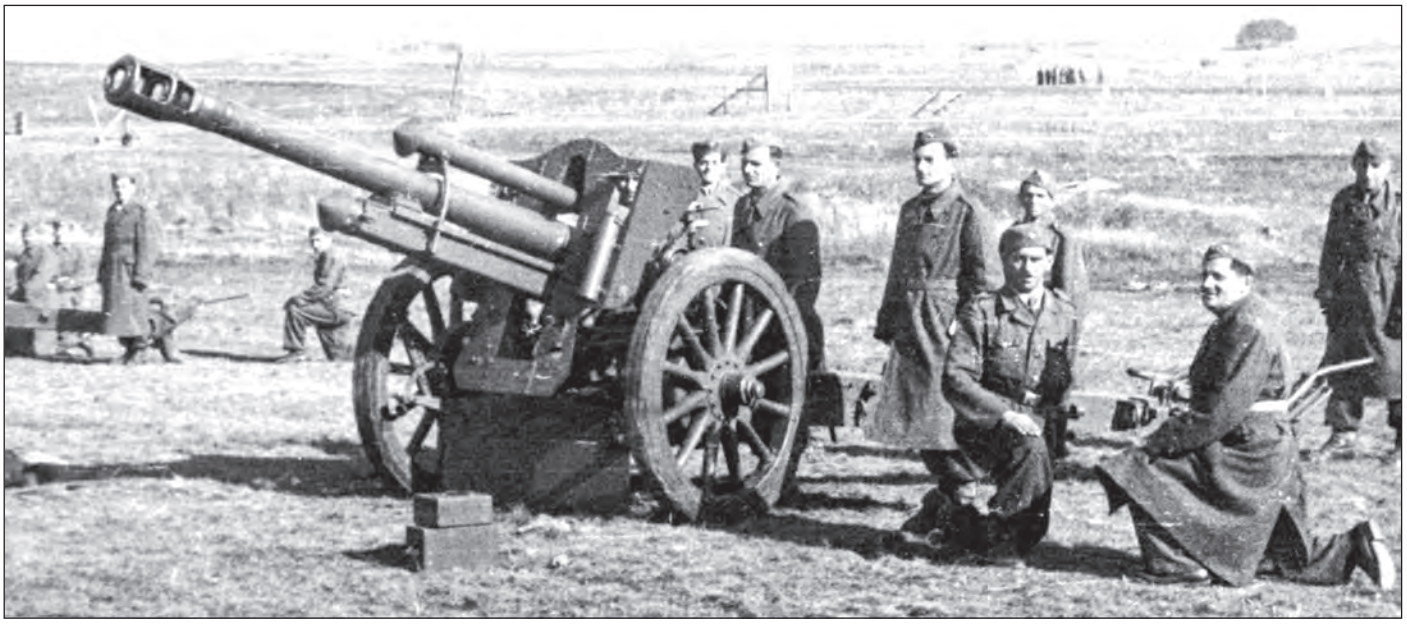
However, their interest in the supply of artillery armament persisted. The negative Czechoslovak attitude on its sale changed for the first time on 10 August 1948, when the Ministry of National Defence approved the delivery of 5,459 rounds of ammunition for the vz. 36 N (7.5cm Gebirgsgeschütz 36) mountain gun. On 27 September, the delivery of four vz. 18/40 N (10.5cm leichte Feldhaubitze 18/40) light howitzers with ammunition was approved. The guns were transported from the military warehouse to Škodovy závody for a thorough overhaul in October. Since they were in very poor technical condition, with many parts damaged or missing, the repair took longer than originally expected. On 1 October, Corps General Šimon Drgáč, recently promoted to Chief of the General Staff, ordered the checking of the state of some 100 mortars to make them ready for a possible sale to Israel. Following this decision, German vz. 36 N (Granatwerfer 36) and old Czechoslovak vz. 36 mortars were dispatched to Israel.

Although the top officials of the KSČ did not approve the delivery of artillery and tanks to Israel in January 1949, military stocks were still full of captured armament from the Second World War and even of arms from the time of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. Therefore, at the beginning of the same month, the supply of different guns and mortars – including ammunition – to Israel was authorised in order to sell weapons that could not be utilised in the inventory of the Czechoslovak Army. The unusable armament and ammunition were sent to Škodovy závody for protracted repairs since they were in such neglected condition. The known deliveries of infantry weapons, artillery armament with related ammunition and communication equipment during 1948 and 1949 are listed in Tables 5, 6 and 7.[19]

Additionally, in July 1948, the arms manufacturer Zbrojovka Brno, in cooperation with the Finnish communist politician Hertta Kuusinen, arranged for Israel the delivery of 50 Tampella 120mm mortars, 15 20mm automatic cannons with ammunition and 100 flamethrowers from Finland.[20]

SPITFIRES FOR THE ISRAELI AIR FORCE

Although the initial Israeli request from 2 June 1948 for the delivery of 30 Supermarine Spitfire LF.Mk IX (Czechoslovak military designation S.89) fighters was promptly turned down, the original decision of the Ministry of National Defence was reversed just days later. Even though the Spitfire LF.Mk IXE was at the time the best fighter aircraft of the Czechoslovak Air Force, its days in Czechoslovak skies were coming to an end. The aircraft were worn out, and the arms embargo imposed on the communist



Training of Israeli artillerists on vz. 18/40 N (10.5cm leichte Feldhaubitze 18/40) in Czechoslovakia. (Albert Grandolini Collection)

A platoon of Israeli-operated 18/40 Ns during training of their crews in 1948. (Albert Grandolini Collection)

TABLE 26: DELIVERY OF ADDITIONAL AIRCRAFT BOMBS, 1948[25]

TYPE	NUMBER OF EXAMPLES	DATE OF DISPATCH	NOTE
OTLP vz. 34, 10kg aircraft bomb	3,000	September 1948	the contract worth US$82,500 was signed with Škodovy závody on 14 August 1948
OTLP vz. 34, 20kg aircraft bomb	1,500	September 1948	

Czechoslovak Republic meant that the obtaining of spare parts and ammunition was becoming a difficult and costly exercise. Moreover, their sale could bring in foreign currency for the acquisition of Bulgarian components for the production of S.199 fighters and for the purchase of spare parts for de Havilland Mosquito FB.Mk VI (Czechoslovak military designation B.36) fighter-bombers.

Consequently, the Ministry of National Defence decided to provide 30 Spitfires on 7 June 1948. Upon further Israeli insistence, it was determined on 3 August that up to 50 aircraft could be offered for export to Israel. On 7 September, Otto Felix signed a contract with KOVO-letecký prodej for the supply of 50 Spitfire LF.Mk IXE fighters with standard armament, spare parts including replacement Rolls-Royce Merlin 66 engines, and 40 drop tanks. The price of one aircraft was set at US$23,000. At that time, the Czechoslovak Air Force had 50 airworthy Spitfires in its inventory, a further nine examples were in need of a major overhaul and the remaining three fighters were damaged beyond repair and thus could serve only as a source of spare parts. Meanwhile, Israeli representatives also concluded a deal for the delivery of old Czechoslovak aircraft bombs (see Table 26).[24]

Beginning 18 September, the Spitfires from combat and training units of the Czechoslovak Air Force were overflown to the subsidiary plant of the Avia company at Kunovice, which was responsible for their overhaul and preparation for the overflight to Israel. The Israeli Air Force wanted to deploy the Spitfires in a new offensive which was planned to begin in October. However, due to the abrupt termination of the Žatec airlift in August that year, their transport by rail and then on board ship would take a relatively long time – the first fighters could reach Israel only in November.

VELVETA

Under the guidance of Sam Pomeranz, Israel's pilot and chief technician at Kunovice, Czechoslovak mechanics stripped the Spitfires of all non-essential equipment, such as guns and radios, and added extra fuel tanks, including two 300-litre Luftwaffe drop tanks. Codenamed Velveta 1, six of the Czechoslovak Spitfires took off from Kunovice on the morning of 24 September 1948 and headed for Nikšić, a former Luftwaffe air base in Yugoslavia near the Albanian border, in order to fill their fuel tanks and to join up with a C-54A which would lead them during the long flight over the Mediterranean. The Skymaster would also drop a dinghy in the event of some problem that would force an Israeli pilot to ditch or use his parachute over the sea. Components taken from the Spitfires at Kunovice were subsequently loaded into a UC-64 Norseman transport airplane that carried them to Nikšić. There, they were put into the escorting C-54A, which hauled them to their destination.

Just three Spitfires eventually reached Israel on 27 September. One fighter crashed during landing at Nikšić. The damaged aircraft was later dismantled and loaded into a C-46 Commando which transported it to Israel. The remaining two Spitfires were impounded by Greek authorities following their forced landing at Rhodes. While one fighter was destroyed by a Greek pilot in a fatal accident shortly afterward, the other was handed over to Israel in December 1950. The newly arrived Spitfires were immediately deployed to the new round of fighting – Operation Yoav, which was carried out from 15–22 October 1948. The objective of the Israeli offensive was to cut the Egyptian lines of communication along the coast and the Beersheba–Hebron–Jerusalem road, and ultimately to conquer the whole of Negev in southern Israel.

TABLE 27: CONTRACT FOR THE DELIVERY OF SPITFIRE LF.MK IXE FIGHTER AIRCRAFT FROM 7 SEPTEMBER 1948[26]

TYPE	NUMBER OF EXAMPLES	DATE OF DISPATCH	NOTE
Spitfire LF Mk IXE, fighter	50	September 1948 – February 1949	delivered with a limited number of machine gun and cannon armament; additional 11 aircraft (including two in unairworthy condition) were bought on 8 November 1949
Hispano Mk II, 20mm cannon	30		spare armament
Browning M2, 0.5 cal machine gun	52		spare armament
Browning .303 Mk II, 0.303 cal machine gun	63		spare armament
20mm ammunition	115,000		spare ammunition
0.5 cal ammunition	85,000		spare ammunition
0.303 cal ammunition	65,000		spare ammunition
Merlin 66, piston engine	10		additional 12 engines were bought on 8 November 1949

Most of the Czechoslovak Spitfires were disassembled at Kunovice, packed into crates and delivered to the customer initially by using railway transportation to Yugoslavia. There, in the port of Šibenik, the airplanes were embarked on board the cargo ships *Arsia* and *Shiu* and transported to Israel by sea. At least 16 fighters were dispatched from Czechoslovakia in this way on 12 and 22 December 1948. The next shipment of 13 crated Spitfires was sent by rail from Kunovice on 25 February 1949, accompanied by one railway car with spare parts that was dispatched from Čakovice. The cargo was officially declared as iron goods. The plant at Kunovice also disassembled two C-64A Norseman light

transport airplanes and one aircraft known as a 'Vultee', all of which were sent to Yugoslavia.

However, the need for the Spitfires was so acute that the Israeli Air Force opted for one additional overflight to Israel under the codename Velveta 2. Although 12 fighters were ready for the second mission by 22 October, they remained at Kunovice because Yugoslavia had revoked permission for the Israelis to refuel at Nikšić. A further delay was caused by the Czechoslovak refusal to grant permission for the Spitfires to take off without clarification of financial disputes. In early December, Israeli officials were able to clear up all issues with their Czechoslovak and Yugoslav partners. Thereafter, ferry pilots, mostly members of the 101st Squadron, arrived in Prague on 9 December, but the date of departure had to be further postponed due to blizzards.

Finally, six Spitfires, led by Sam Pomerance, took off from the Kunovice factory airfield on 18 December. However, the poor weather – with low visibility and snow – persisted, which cost Pomerance his life when his airplane flew into a mountain in Yugoslavia. Bill Pomerantz, meanwhile, suffered minor injuries following an unsuccessful forced landing in Yugoslavia which turned his Spitfire into a burning wreck. The remaining four aircraft returned to Kunovice. Despite the ongoing bad weather, the operation was repeated the next day. After numerous difficulties, all six Spitfires (four original and two replacement aircraft) made it to Nikšić safely after a flight lasting three hours and 40 minutes. The fighters arrived at the Yugoslavian airfield on 20 December. There, Israeli technicians removed the Yugoslav markings from the Spitfires and painted roundels of the Israeli Air Force on them. Following a technical inspection, two Spitfires were considered incapable of flying the second leg over the sea. Hence, they were dismantled and reached Israel inside two C-46 Commandos on 30 December.

Meanwhile, on 22 December, the Israeli military launched Operation Horev in the western Negev – the final offensive of the 1948 Arab-Israeli War – with the aim of trapping Egyptian Army forces in the Gaza Strip. Therefore, the immediate return of 101st Squadron pilots became extremely urgent. Four Spitfires, with an escorting C-46, left Nikšić on 23 December and landed in Israel later the same day. The last six fighters were overflown three days later. Contrary to the original plan, the former Czechoslovak Spitfires were introduced into the inventory of the 101st Squadron.

Additional deliveries of Spitfires from Czechoslovakia were to follow. The Czechoslovak Air Force still had 12 airplanes of this type, although in poor technical condition, with additional engines and further spare parts. Israeli representatives expressed their interest in the acquisition of 11 of these Spitfires, two of which had crashed without the possibility of bringing them back into airworthy condition (the 12th Spitfire, with one power plant, remained in Czechoslovakia as a museum exhibit). The corresponding contract between KOVO-letecký prodej and the Israeli embassy for the delivery of 11 fighters (two of them as a source of spare parts), 12 Merlin 66 engines and all available spare parts was signed on 8 November 1949.

Airworthy Spitfires for this very last shipment were overflown to Kunovice on 20 January 1950. After overhaul and test flights, the aircraft were taken over by the Israeli technical commission. However, the deal was executed in a period of completely altered political conditions (in July 1950, the Czechoslovak Ministry of National Defence would issue an order which prohibited any export of military materiel to Israel). Even though the aircraft and spare parts were crated between 5 and 27 April 1950, the crates were still present at Kunovice in October that year.[27]

THE TRAINING OF ISRAEL'S AIRMEN

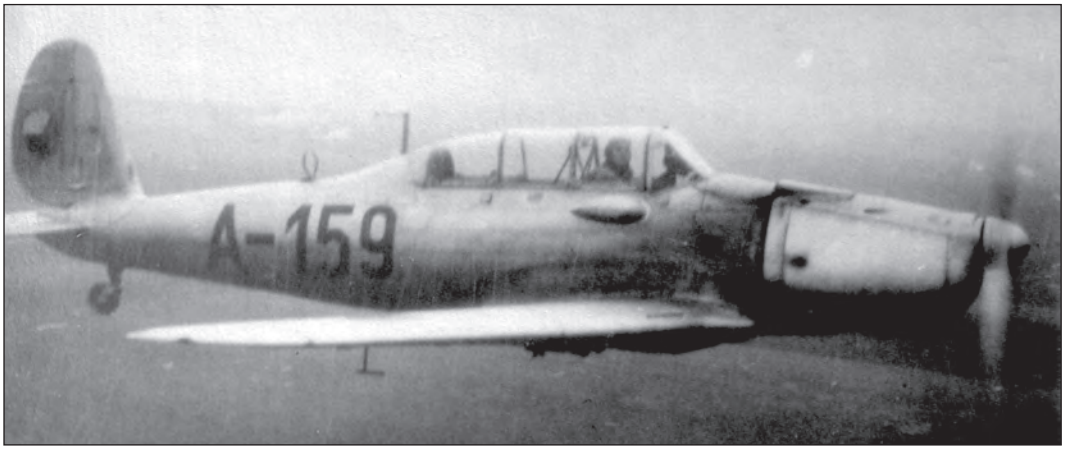
Israel, in the early days of its existence, was in acute need of arms and properly trained troops; Prague was ready to provide not only the former, but the latter too. The crucial impulse for military training of Israeli personnel in Czechoslovakia was the acquisition of S.199 and Spitfire fighters, which required properly qualified pilots and ground crews. The basic framework for this undertaking was laid in an agreement between Otto Felix and the leadership of the Czechoslovak Air Force during the first days of May 1948. Despite immense problems that plagued the service, this enterprise was approved by the Chief of the Main Staff, Army General Bohumil Boček, Minister of National Defence Army General Ludvík Svoboda and Prime Minister Klement Gottwald on 5 May. The training of Israeli military personnel received the Czechoslovak cover name Operation DI (*Důvěrné Izrael* – Classified, Israel) which was subsequently also used for deliveries of armaments.

The Czechoslovak Air Force was not in good shape at that time. Of the eight planned combat aviation divisions, just two of them were established. Some of their subordinated aviation regiments were merely paper units due to the lack of combat aircraft, supporting equipment and personnel. The arms embargo imposed following the communist coup d'état had also started to take its toll on the combat readiness of its Western armament. On top of that, recently started massive communist purges eliminated most of the battle-hardened veterans who had fought in the ranks of the Royal Air Force during the Second World War.

Under the agreement with Israel, the Czechoslovak Air Force was obliged to provide conversion training on S.199 fighters for 10 experienced pilots and up to 10 aircraft mechanics, complete pilot training for some 35 cadets – stretching from elementary to combat phase – the training of approximately 70 aircraft technicians in all needed specialisations and the preparation of some 20 radio operators. During June, the original Israeli requirement was changed to further provide training for personnel who could later form the nucleus of an air force base. In order to keep the operation secret, some of the Jewish trainees received Czechoslovak military uniforms with air cadet insignia.

The very first training undertaken was a crash course on the S.199 fighters. The initial group of Israeli aviators, some of them former fighter pilots with wartime experience, went to České Budějovice air base in May 1948 in order to undergo training at the local Fighter Training Centre (*Stíhací výcvikové středisko*) attached to the 2nd Aviation Division (*2. letecká divize*). A large number of the division's pilots and ground crews had served with the RAF's No. 312 (Czechoslovak) Squadron during the Second World War. The first graduates, Modi Alon and Ezer Weizman, returned to Israel on 20 May 1948 on board a C-54 Skymaster which was transporting a dismantled S.199. They, together with additional pilots trained on this course, subsequently constituted the nucleus of the 101st Squadron. The conversion course at České Budějovice commenced with familiarisation flights around the air base in the cockpit of C-6 (Czechoslovak production version of Bücker Bü 181 Bestmann), C-104 (Czechoslovak production version of Bücker Bü 131 D Jungmann) and C-2 trainers. The next step was one or two flights with CS-99 (Czechoslovak designation of Messerschmitt Bf 109 G-12) combat trainers that served as preparation for a solo flight on difficult-to-handle Avia S.199s. The conversion training of the first five Israeli pilots was undergone in such haste that they only managed a handful of flight hours on S.199s, with no high-altitude flights, formation flying, bombing or gunnery practice at all. The course lasted until late July 1948 and provided conversion training

An Avia C-2 of the 2nd Aviation Division, Czechoslovak Air Force, used for training of future Israeli pilots. (Miroslav Irra Collection)



Another Avia used for training of Israeli pilots – this time a C-2B of the Military Aviation Academy at Hradec Králové. (Miroslav Irra Collection)

for 28 Israeli fighter pilots. The flight time they spent in the air depended on the skills and experience of the respective aviator, but it was generally minimal: between 20 minutes and 13 hours on C-2s, one hour to three hours and 20 minutes on CS-99s and 25 minutes to five hours and 40 minutes on S.199s.

In the meantime, new pilot training began in earnest at the Aviation Military Academy (*Letecká vojenská akademie*) in Hradec Králové. This was designated for 13 Israeli citizens with civilian pilot training but limited flying experience. Their flying training commenced in early July 1948 and was characterised by intensive air activity, culminating in bombing and gunnery practice lasting several days. However, the shortcomings of the previous training, coupled with eagerness, resulted in eight aircraft accidents between 20 July and 2 September, caused mostly by mishandled landings in Avia C-2B1 advanced trainers. On 9 September, the whole Israeli group was moved to České Budějovice to the Fighter Course (*Stíhací kurs*) of the 5th Aviation Regiment (the former Fighter Training Centre that was reorganised on 22 July that year). While the best five cadets (among them future test pilot Danny Shapira and future commander of the Israeli Air Force Mordechai Hod) started their conversion on S.199s, the remaining ones continued flying C-6, C-104 and C-2 trainers. Upon the request of Israeli officials, training on S.199 fighters ceased on 7 October, substituted by conversion on Spitfires in order to have qualified pilots on this aircraft, 50 of which were bought from the stock of the Czechoslovak Air Force the previous month. However, the conversion training on Spitfire fighters only lasted between 11 and 16 October, when all training at České Budějovice was terminated prematurely. Five Israeli cadets received the Czechoslovak 'fighter pilot' qualification (two of them later participated in Operation Velveta 2), while the rest qualified only as 'liaison pilot'.

The largest intake of Jewish student pilots was absorbed by the Pilot School III (*Pilotní škola III*) based at Olomouc airfield and organised in the structure of the Aviation Training School (*Letecké učiliště*). Its task was to provide shortened elementary and advanced flying training for two groups of cadets. The first group of Jewish volunteers numbered 32 men; except for three Israelis and one Pole, they were all Czechoslovak citizens. The actual training began on 7 July 1948. Following the results of initial military drills, physical and psychological examination, the 10 weakest students were reassigned to the Aviation Signal School (*Letecká spojovací škola*) at Chrudim on 21 July. The elementary flying training on C-6 and C-106 (Czechoslovak version of Bücker Bü 181 Bestmann) trainers lasted until late August. The subsequent high-intensity advanced portion of the course took its toll in the form of crashes and student pilots killed. On 25 October, cadet Gideon Szuran, flying a C-2, perished during air-to-ground gunnery training at Žárovice firing range near Prostějov. One C-6 hit a C-106 during a training sortie around Olomouc airfield on 24 November, with both student pilots, Juraj Moškovič and Leopold Bergman, perishing in their wrecked aircraft.

The training of the second group of volunteers, comprising an additional 15 cadets, commenced on 2 September. Unlike the first course, this team was composed of veterans of earlier fighting in the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, so their training syllabus was shortened. Both courses ended on 27 November 1948 and produced 35 successful graduates.[28]

THE CREATION OF ISRAEL AIR FORCE GROUND CREWS

At that time, the training of ground crews for the Israeli Air Force was already in full swing. On 20 July, 25 Jewish trainees (mostly Czechoslovak nationals complemented by several Poles, Bulgarians and Hungarians) began to attend the course at the Aviation Signal School at Chrudim. Although their numbers were strengthened with the arrival of 10 unsuccessful student pilots from Olomouc, just 15 men managed to graduate from the course in the specialisation of communication equipment mechanic on 27 November. Most of the discharged trainees were subsequently incorporated into the Brigade of Jewish Volunteers that underwent training at the Libavá military ground.

A larger course for ground support personnel took place at the Military Specialist School for Aircraft Mechanics (*Vojenské odborné*

školy leteckých mechaniků) at Liberec, beginning on 26 July. The undertaking was attended by 70 men, most of them Czechoslovak citizens, some even with combat experience from Czechoslovak units fighting on the Western or Eastern front during the Second World War. Initially, the trainees were prepared for the maintenance and repair of Avia S.199 fighters. Due to their unavailability at Liberec, practical training took place at Aviation Base 5 (*Letecká základna 5*) at Pardubice. However, after accidents and combat losses, only a handful of S.199s were operational in the ranks of the 101st Squadron at that time, so Israeli officials requested a change in the training syllabus. According to the new requirement, the attendees were to be prepared for the technical support of Spitfire fighters and transport aircraft with radial engines.

Divisional General Josef Hanuš from the headquarters of the Czechoslovak Air Force reacted affirmatively to this request on 18 November and decided that further training would be undertaken on Spitfires and C-47 Skytrains. Instead of the originally proposed three-month training on these types of aircraft, a shortened course lasting six weeks was implemented, finishing in December. From the original number of trainees, 54 men managed to graduate from the course, while 15 unsuccessful attendees were transferred to ground forces training at Libavá. Most of the men trained at Liberec left the ranks of the Israeli Air Force in 1950. Some of them remained in the aviation business and worked for El Al airlines or in Israel's aviation industry.

During the second half of 1948, the Czechoslovak Air Force trained a total of 76 pilots and 69 ground crew, who created the nucleus of the fledgling Israeli Air Force. Except for the cost of the actual training, Israel paid an additional 14,491,424.90 CSK for the losses of Czechoslovak aircraft. Three airplanes were destroyed during Operation DI, while a further 10 had to be repaired after several mishaps.[29]

PARATROOPERS AND TANK CREWS

The Czechoslovak military did not only play a crucial role in the training of personnel for the Israeli Air Force. In the frame of Operation DI, troops were also trained in other specialisations. Due to the great demands on maintaining the secrecy of the whole enterprise, the number of Czechoslovak officers acquainted with the training of Israeli personnel was kept to a minimum. The top official of the Ministry of National Defence responsible for the organisation of training and arms deliveries was Colonel Stanislav Palla. The other Czechoslovak officers involved in Operation DI came mostly from the ranks of Czechoslovak military intelligence – the 5th Department (Defence Intelligence). Haganah was sending selected soldiers and instructors to Czechoslovak military courses directly from Palestine. Furthermore, Jewish volunteers from around the world were called up to undergo training in Czechoslovakia. Organisational issues were handled by the Israeli embassy in Prague, with the help of appointed Haganah officers. However, even at the time of this cooperation, there was a certain amount of distrust, and the Merkas Lesherut Haam organisation, responsible for the recruiting of Jews in Czechoslovakia and abroad, was kept under surveillance by Czechoslovak intelligence services.

According to a general agreement between Haganah representatives and the General Staff from 5 May 1948, the Czechoslovak Army was tasked to provide military parachute training for some 70 personnel over five or six months. At first, the Jewish volunteers, mainly of Czechoslovak and Hungarian nationality, underwent basic drill with the Infantry Battalion 71 / Airborne/ (*Pěší prapor 71 /výsadkový/*) for five weeks. Thereafter, they were transferred to the Airborne Training School (*Výsadkové učiliště*) at Stráž pod Ralskem for actual training in raids, sabotage, reconnaissance, guerrilla fighting and parachute jumps, under the leadership of chief instructor Captain Josef Černota. There, they were joined by eight Haganah officers (led by Chaim Guri) who already had airborne training and combat experience under their belt. The extremely physically and psychologically demanding training, in the style of British commandos, began on 17 July with 48 trainees. One night-time practice guerrilla raid proved fatal for Martin Davidovič, who suffered a severe injury that cost his life on 30 July. Nevertheless, the course ended in early September and was successfully completed by 24 men. During the training, 6,061 rounds of infantry ammunition, 180 hand grenades and 67kg (148lb) of explosives were expended. The Israeli officers subsequently attended theoretical and tactical instruction at the Airborne Troops Command (*Velitelství výsadkového vojska*) in Prague. The course was run by its chief of staff, Lieutenant Colonel Rudolf Krzák. All Jewish paratroopers trained in Czechoslovakia departed for Israel in October.

In conjunction with the acquisition of armoured vehicles in Czechoslovakia, Israeli officials requested the training of tank crews at Czechoslovak Army facilities. Although Prague delivered no armour to Israel, the training of 43 Jewish volunteers indeed took place in the Tank Training School (*Tankové učiliště*) at Dědice, near Vyškov, in July and August 1948. Men from Czechoslovakia (25), Poland (12), Palestine (four) and Bulgaria (two) were trained not only in the operation of LT-38/37 light tanks and ST-I tank destroyers, but in the theory of tank warfare. Their training culminated in live firing exercise using the 37mm and 75mm main guns. The tank course was completed on 26 August and the graduates received a six-day vacation. Thereafter, most of them were reassigned to the Brigade of Jewish Volunteers for follow-on training on T-34/85 and Cromwell tanks.[30]

THE BRIGADE OF JEWISH VOLUNTEERS

The announcement of an independent Israeli state had created a spontaneous wave of sympathy in Czechoslovak society. These feelings were present among Jewish soldiers of the former I Czechoslovak Army Corps (*1. československý armádní sbor*) that fought alongside the Red Army against German forces on the Eastern Front in the later stages of the Second World War. Some of these officers, upon receiving advice from the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, decided to help the fledgling state in a practical manner by establishing and training a military unit of Jewish volunteers in Czechoslovakia. Proponents of this scheme – particularly Captain Samson Šachta, assisted by Staff Captain Artur Hanák, Captain Vilém Kahan, Staff Captain Karel Fanta and various other officers – discussed this idea with Israeli representatives in May and June 1948. Negotiations led to the signing of an agreement on 25 June, the purpose of which was 'to organise, with the consent of the competent offices, an independent combat-ready military unit of Jewish volunteers numbering approximately one thousand men and women on the territory of the Czechoslovak Republic. This unit will be available to the Government of Israel after completion of the necessary training.'

According to the agreement, the Czechoslovaks were to provide training facilities, armament and equipment for trained soldiers, necessary ammunition and other military materiel. Israel was committed to secure financial support for the operation, pay the cost of training, financially back soldiers and their families during the period of training and then arrange their transport to Israel.

Josef Černota, chief instructor for the first 70 Israeli paratroopers trained in Czechoslovakia. (VÚA-VHA Praha)

A group of female members of the Jewish Volunteer Brigade during their training in Czechoslovakia. (Albert Grandolini Collection)

It took only a very short time for the whole undertaking to be approved by the Czechoslovak military leadership, including the head of Czechoslovak military intelligence, Bedřich Reicin. Šachta and Kahan subsequently became representatives on the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia for the establishment of the Jewish military unit.

The recruitment of volunteers for the Brigade of Jewish Volunteers was organised by Merkas Lesherut Haam from late June. Deputy Chief of the Main Staff, Corps General Šimon Drgáč, issued an order that named Major Antonín Sochor, holder of the title Hero of the Soviet Union, as commander of the new military formation, the establishment of which happened at Hranice na Moravě on 20 August 1948. The covert training of the unit's first 305 troops began in earnest at the Libavá Military Training Camp (*Vojenský výcvikový tabor Libavá*) three days later. The soldiers were garrisoned at the nearby village of Vojnovice. The unit received an initial complement of infantry armament comprising 300 vz. 98 N rifles (Czechoslovak designation for German Karabiner 98k), 330 vz. 40 N (MP 40) submachine guns, 100 vz. 38 N (Walther P38) pistols, 12 vz. 26 light machine guns, four vz. 37 heavy machine guns, four vz. 38

Alois Soldan served as the top Czech instructor for the Jewish Volunteer Brigade. (Albert Grandolini Collection)

By autumn 1948, Jewish volunteers trained in Czechoslovakia were already in Israel, where they saw intensive action on multiple frontlines. (Albert Grandolini Collection)

(Czechoslovak designation for Soviet DShKM) heavy machine guns and a couple of vz. 41 N (Flammenwerfer 41) flamethrowers. In spite of Czechoslovak security measures to conceal the establishment of the Jewish brigade, its existence became public knowledge around the Libavá military training ground during September.

During the early stages of its existence, the unit was visited by two Israeli military officials – General David Sealtiel, acting in the role of inspector of the General Staff of the Israel Defense Forces, and Jacob Salomon who was to become the unit's commander after its arrival to Israel. During the inspection, both the officers expressed their complete satisfaction with the attained level of unit readiness. In order to improve the maintaining of secrecy, the brigade garrison was moved to the more remote village of Velká Střelná on 9 September. The intake of new troops ran at full speed, and thus, on 27 October, the brigade was composed of 60 officers, 218 non-commissioned officers and 1,057 privates, totalling 1,335 men and women. Meanwhile, the life of the Jewish troops at Libavá settled into a regular daily rhythm of demanding training lasting 10 hours, divided into a morning period (6:00–11:00 a.m.), language course and afternoon period (1:00–6:30 p.m.). Their training was supervised by 10 Israeli officers.

The growing number of brigade troops was matched by the increase of its fighting capability, with tank and artillery training in full swing. The artillerymen started their training with two vz. 18/40 N (10.5cm leichte Feldhaubitze 18/40) light howitzers, four vz. 40 N (7.5cm Panzerabwehrkanone 40) anti-tank guns, two 37mm anti-aircraft guns and four 81mm mortars. The course for tank crews

After selling several shiploads of arms, Czechoslovakia began providing training to Israeli combatants as well. This photograph shows a group of them being introduced to operating vz. 26 machine guns. (Albert Grandolini Collection)

was complicated by the small number of available T-34/85 and Cromwell tanks and a lack of tank ammunition. Several live firing exercises with T-34/85 tanks took place only at the very end of the brigade's training between 25 October and 4 November.

In early September, the brigade troops prepared a memorandum for the Israeli government in which they demanded approval of brigade organisation charts, recognition of Czechoslovak military ranks in Israel, acceptance of Czechoslovak officers and NCOs into the IDF, combat deployment of the brigade as a complete indivisible unit, social provision for soldiers' families, state support for the colonisation of allocated territory and the confirmation of Jacob Salomon as brigade commander. Major Antonín Sochor arrived in Tel Aviv on 19 September and handed over the memorandum to the first Chief of the General Staff of the IDF, Yaakov Dori. During their working stay in Israel, Major Sochor and Captain Šachta were informed about the combat readiness of Israel's military and the situation on the front lines. Before the departure of the Czechoslovak officers, Israeli representatives approved the brigade organisation charts and that the brigade would be deployed into combat as one unit. Sochor returned to the unit on 10 October to inform the soldiers about the situation in Israel and motivate them to intensify their training.

The communists had planned for the Brigade of Jewish Volunteers to have its own important political mission. During March and April 1948, Secretary of the Communist Party of Israel Shmuel Mikunis stood behind an idea to create armed units of communist and leftist Jews from Eastern Europe. However, this intention was pre-empted by the activities of Ehud Avriel and Otto Felix, who negotiated with the Ministry of National Defence for the military training of Jewish volunteers (pilots, aircraft maintenance personnel, paratroopers and tank crews). Hence, Czechoslovak communists, acting on behalf of Shmuel Mikunis, wanted to push through their propaganda in the establishment of the Brigade of Jewish Volunteers. However, among some 900 volunteers, there were only around 15 communists. Moreover, communist activities were limited by the very short period of time that was reserved for the preparation of the unit. Therefore, in spite of numerous communist agitations at the Libavá Military Training Camp, the brigade never became a paramilitary wing of the Communist Party of Israel.

Meanwhile, training continued at a rapid pace in order to be completed by 5 November 1948. Activity at the Libavá training ground culminated on 2 November with the simulated offensive operation of a reinforced infantry battalion, supported by field artillery, anti-aircraft artillery and a tank company. Although the time for the brigade's training had been very short, most of the brigade members were men who had undergone compulsory military service in the Czechoslovak Army, while a large portion of the officers were Second World War veterans of the I Czechoslovak Army Corps. The Jewish soldiers and their families, overall almost 3,000 people, eventually left Czechoslovakia in three railway transports in January, February and March 1949, arriving in Israel by sea from ports in Romania, Yugoslavia and Italy. Contrary to previous promises, in late 1948, the Israeli government decided to split up the brigade following its arrival in Israel. Instead, its members were mostly distributed among existing units, often after the end of the 1948 Arab-Israeli War.[31]

TABLE 28: BRIGADE OF JEWISH VOLUNTEERS ORDER OF BATTLE, OCTOBER 1948[32]

BRIGADE COMMANDER: MJR. ANTONÍN SOCHOR	
UNIT	**COMMANDER**
Staff	Staff Captain Maxmilián Weber (chief of staff)
Tank Battalion	Staff Captain Richard Fišl
Artillery Battalion	Captain B Faltera
Medical Company	Captain Malvína Fantová
Engineer Company	
Automobile Company	
Large-Calibre Anti-Aircraft Machine Gun Company	
Gas Platoon	
Training Platoon	

Training of Jewish volunteers on the vz. 40 N (7.5cm Panzerabwehrkanone 40) anti-tank gun of German origin. (Albert Grandolini Collection)

FROM FRIENDSHIP TO HOSTILITY

The IDF' interest in the acquisition of Czechoslovak armament continued even after the end of the fighting. During his visit to Škodovy závody at Plzeň on 8 June 1949, Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the IDF Colonel Yigael Yadin expressed a desire for some of the latest weapons. Consequently, in October 1949, the Israeli purchasing commission ordered 20 C8 mountain guns, 24 H6 (H9) field howitzers, 16 A21 anti-tank guns, 10 B28 mortars and related ammunition for some 450 million CSK. Besides this, the Israeli officials wanted to place an order at Zbrojovka Brno for 200,000 upgraded P-18 rifles, 600 vz. 22 training rifles, 1,000 ZK 476 submachine guns, 1,000 ZK 420 self-loading rifles, 1,500–4,000 ZB-30 light machine guns and 100 ZB-37 heavy machine guns. The delivery of tanks retired from the Czechoslovak Army inventory was also discussed. However, because of excessive prices (one vehicle was offered at the same value as two Sherman tanks from Western Europe), no deal materialised. In the end, apparently, almost no armament ordered for the IDF in 1949 and 1950 was delivered, largely due to the completely altered political landscape. Some minor exceptions are mentioned in Table 29.

Originally friendly, Czechoslovak-Israeli relations began to deteriorate gradually from 1949. Already in January, the Communist Party of Israel suffered a major setback in parliamentary elections, gaining just 3.51 percent of the votes. Such a result was met with little delight by communists in Moscow and Prague, as the prospects that Israel could one day become a pro-Soviet country were shattered. A distinct change came in September 1949, when the United States granted Israel a loan to the value of US$100 million, which prompted East European communist governments to label Israel 'the Helper of Imperialism'. According to subsequent analysis by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Prague, the loan was a clear sign of the Israeli shift towards the West. Moreover, according to an intelligence report of the Czechoslovak Ministry of National Defence from September 1949, officers of the IDF underwent military training in the United States.

Although Prague still had an impressive reputation for military assistance during the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, Czechoslovak communist officials refused repeated Israeli offers of economic cooperation. Instead, they criticised Israel as an anti-Soviet outpost in the Middle East. The Czechoslovak communist leadership supported Soviet superpower interests in the area, completely ignoring relations with Israel that could be beneficial for Czechoslovakia. Prague's political actions and statements during 1950 and 1951 worsened the situation further, and initially led to tensions in mutual relations and then to open animosity between Czechoslovakia and Israel. This downfall reached its climax between 1951 and 1953 with an abrupt wave of Czechoslovak anti-Semitism, which was closely interconnected with the Soviet-designed show trial of General Secretary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia Rudolf Slánský and other leading Czechoslovak Jewish communists. During the ensuing purges, two Israeli citizens, Mordechai Oren and Simon Orenstein, were arrested and tortured in order to extract 'confessions' that the United States had let Israel emerge as an American base in the Middle East and that Israel had carried out anti-Czechoslovak espionage, in which Rudolf Slánský played a leading role.

TABLE 29: KNOWN DELIVERIES OF MILITARY MATERIEL TO ISRAEL, 1949–50[33]

TYPE	NUMBER OF EXAMPLES	DATE OF DISPATCH	NOTE
Škoda 1101 P, police car	2	3 January 1950	
	8	28 June 1950	
binocular 6x30	1,000	2 December 1949	delivered by Československé závody přesného strojírenství
	1,000	23 November 1950	
binocular 7x50	1,000	23 November 1950	
pocket compass	2,000	2 December 1949	
Clinometer	250	2 December 1949	
aiming compass	25	2 December 1949	

The reversal in Czechoslovakia's stand towards Israel was felt by Israeli officials due to various Czechoslovak obstructions in negotiations and arms deliveries in 1949. There was not only a change in attitude towards Israel within the Soviet Bloc, but a rapid worsening of diplomatic relations with Arab states and unwanted public attention caused by inflated reports by news agencies such as Reuters, UP, AP and the BBC. This

created an impression that only Czechoslovakia and Israel were breaching the UN arms embargo, although Arab states supported by Great Britain were doing basically the same. The situation only worsened during the following years. For example, a possible acquisition of Z-26 Trenér elementary training aircraft in 1949 was not approved. Despite the insistence of KOVO-letecký prodej, Corps General Vladimír Drnec confirmed the negative stance on the export of these airplanes on 6 January 1950. The delivery of artillery weapons from Škodovy závody, ordered in October 1949, was also rejected by the same general on 2 March 1950. Around the same time, KOVO-letecký prodej wanted to sell 50 C-106 and 50 C-104 training aircraft to Israel, but a request for their export was rejected by the Ministry of National Defence in May 1950. In July of the same year, the Ministry of National Defence refused to submit approval for licence production of ZK 476 submachine guns in Israel. The issue of military shipments from communist Czechoslovakia for the IDF was solved once and for all in the decree *č.j. 2177/taj./prům./50* which was issued on 14 July 1950, stating that the Ministry of National Defence 'disagree with deliveries of any materiel to Israel'.[34]

Although very short-lived, Czechoslovak military assistance for Israel was not only extremely intensive but was crucial for the survival of the new state in the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. Arms contracts signed in 1948 and 1949 between Jewish Agency/state of Israel officials and various Czechoslovak arms factories and foreign trading companies reached a monumental value of 730,896,000 CSK. However, Czechoslovak business officials were more interested in making deals than in bureaucratic thoroughness. Thus, in 1953, Czechoslovak ministries found it impossible to completely reconstruct the flow of deliveries, including the numbers and types of specific arms and ammunition exported to Israel. The same was true for the terms of specific contracts. Czechoslovak authorities were therefore not even able to assess for certain if Israel had paid for all delivered armaments. According to the documentation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as of 1953, the state of Israel still owed to Czechoslovakia some US$ 97,000 for military shipments.[35]

WE ARE LOOKING FOR CIVILIAN ENGINES

The enmity between Czechoslovakia and Israel continued until the Six-Day War in June 1967. The crushing defeat of Arab forces in that conflict prompted the Soviet Union and Czechoslovak Socialist Republic to sever diplomatic relations with Israel completely on 10 June 1967. The other Soviet Bloc countries, apart from Romania, followed suit in subsequent days (Czechoslovak-Israeli diplomatic relations were restored only after the fall of the communist regime in Prague, on 9 February 1990).[36]

In the Six-Day War, the IDF captured some 860 enemy armoured vehicles, including 256 Egyptian T-54/55 and 20 Syrian T-54/55 tanks, all of which apparently came from Soviet production plants. During 1968 and 1969, 146 of them were modified to the Tiran 4 and Tiran 5 standard and subsequently introduced into the service of the Israeli 274th Brigade.[37]

For the operation of the captured tanks, it was necessary to secure the supply of appropriate spare parts. According to available information, Czechoslovakia may have been an involuntary actor in this Israeli effort. In late 1969, the Czechoslovak foreign trading company Pragoinvest commenced buying Wola 5Va engines from the Polish People's Republic and then re-exported them through the American company ROSBEN Import Corp at very favourable prices to capitalist countries, where they were supposed to be used in drilling rigs. However, the Czechoslovak scheme soon ran into problems. The final customer for the engines was FOB Trieste, but their end-users remained unknown to Pragoinvest. In May 1970, the entire business was discontinued and the planned supply of spare parts was cancelled for fear that all engines could be used in military vehicles in Israel. In the following month, a Pragoinvest representative wrote to the Federal Ministry of National Defence[38] (*Federální ministerstvo národní obrany*) asking whether it could assess the design of the Wola 5Va engines according to attached documentation. In doing so, Pragoinvest tried to ensure that the powerplants could be safely delivered to the West in order to complete the contract with FOB Trieste, which threatened to claim damages for non-delivery of spare parts. The request was forwarded to the Tank and Automotive Service (*Tanková a automobilní služba*) of the Czechoslovak People's Army. To the dismay of Pragoinvest officials, the deputy chief of the Tank and Automobile Service had no other choice than to state that the Wola 5Va was 'a modification of the V-54 tank engine, which is adjusted to lower power output and revolutions to increase its lifetime. … Given our information that Israel acquired T-54A tanks during the Israeli–Egyptian conflict, it is likely that these are engines with potential use in these vehicles.'[39]

THE MASSIVE INTAKE

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, Czechoslovakia replenished depleted stocks of armoured vehicles of Israel's main adversaries – Egypt and Syria. Both countries then used these tanks, APCs and armoured support vehicles in their attack against Israel during the Yom Kippur War in October 1973. The Israelis captured many of these vehicles during their own counterstrike. The lack of modern APCs in the ranks of the IDF meant that some captured OT-62 TOPAS vehicles were immediately deployed into the fighting against their original owners – the Egyptian Army. Some of these OT-62s, in the hands of Israeli soldiers from the 162nd Division, reached the city of Suez, where they ended their life as burnt-out wrecks.

After the end of the war, some 1,500 T-54, T-55 and T-62 tanks were captured by the IDF. This bounty enabled Israel to establish new units equipped with armoured vehicles manufactured in Warsaw Pact countries. Some of these examples, including MT-55 (MT-55KS) armoured vehicle-launched bridges and VT-55 (VT-55KS) armoured recovery vehicles, have survived to this day and can be seen in the Yad La'shiryon Armored Corps Museum at Latrun.

2
JORDAN (OPERATION 113, COUNTRY 614)

Although the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan became independent on 25 May 1946, Prague and Amman only established official diplomatic relations almost 20 years later – in April 1964. There were two main reasons for this course of action: Czechoslovakia initially supported the Israeli cause during the late 1940s, and given Jordan's pro-West strategic orientation, the communist leadership in Prague had no desire to establish diplomatic contacts with Amman. Despite this general political background, Czechoslovak arms were ready to flow to Jordan in 1956.[1]

SYRIAN INTENTIONS

On 17 July 1956, the Soviet *chargé d'affaires* informed Czechoslovak Prime Minister Viliam Široký about recent developments in Syria. Syrian President Shukri al-Quwatli and Minister of Foreign Affairs

TABLE 30: CZECHOSLOVAK ARMS TO BE DELIVERED TO JORDAN THROUGH SYRIA IN 1956 (UNREALISED)[3]

TYPE	NUMBER OF EXAMPLES	NOTE
Sa 23, 9mm submachine gun	3,000	from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army
vz. 52, 7.62mm rifle	10,000	from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army
vz. 52, 7.62mm light machine gun	2,500	from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army
vz. 48, 9mm round	3 million	for Sa 23 submachine gun, from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army
vz. 52, 7.62mm round	10 million	for vz. 52 rifle and vz. 52 machine gun, from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army
T-21, bazooka	200	from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army
round for T-21	5,000	from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army

T-21 anti-tank weapon, 200 of which Prague attempted to sell to Amman, in 1956. (VÚA-VHA Praha)

Salah al-Din al-Bitar had asked the Soviet ambassador in Damascus if Czechoslovakia would be ready to deliver infantry and artillery weapons worth 20 million Syrian pounds, under the same conditions as a previous arms contract with Prague, from 22 May 1956. The Syrians wanted to gift these weapons to the Jordanian National Guard, a Palestinian-dominated part-time militia conscripting able-bodied men between the ages of 18 and 40. The donated arms were to serve as a motivation to convince the Jordanians of the benefits of close cooperation with Syria and Egypt. The Soviet ambassador recommended al-Quwatli to discuss the matter directly with the Czechoslovak ambassador in Damascus.

This Soviet–Syrian meeting was followed by negotiations between the Czechoslovak ambassador and the Chief of the General Staff of the Syrian Arab Armed Forces, who provided a precise specification of the requested weapons. The export of infantry armament worth 41,298,000 CSK to Jordan was approved by a resolution of the Politburo (*Politické byro*) of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (*Ústřední výbor Komunistické strany Československa*, ÚV KSČ) on 17 September 1956. The contract between Prague and Damascus stipulated the supply of weapons with a 25 percent discount, without training of Jordanian soldiers in Czechoslovakia or sending of Czechoslovak instructors to Jordan. Twenty percent of the contract value was to be paid by Syria during 1956, credit with a 2 percent interest rate payable until 1960 provided for the remaining amount.

In the meantime, military courting between Damascus, Cairo and Amman continued, culminating several days before the outbreak of the Suez War, on 25 October 1956, when Jordan signed a defence treaty with Egypt and Syria. Cooperation was to be deepened when Jordan signed the Arab Solidarity Agreement with Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Syria on 19 January 1957. Under the terms of this agreement, the three countries were to provide financial assistance to Amman in order to replace the annual British aid that ended with the abrogation of the Anglo–Jordanian Treaty. However, the new arrangement had important cracks because of Egyptian and Syrian inability or unwillingness to subsidise the Jordanian Army. Against this background, Czechoslovak weapons destined for the National Guard were readied for delivery. The arms, originating from the stockpiles of the Czechoslovak People's Army, were delivered to Syria in December 1956. However, subsequent political turmoil in Jordan frustrated the entire operation.

The new Prime Minister of Jordan, Suleiman Nabulsi, merged the Arab Legion with the National Guard, thereby creating a 35,000-strong Jordanian Army. He also decided to establish diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, which was not welcomed by King Hussein of the Jordanian royal family. Nabulsi was also a proponent of Jordan joining an Arab federation with Egypt and Syria, which would reduce King Hussein to the role of a figurehead. After its policies clashed frequently with that of the royal palace, Suleiman Nabulsi's Arabist government was forced to resign on 10 April 1957. Three days later, violent confrontations broke out at the

A vz. 52 light machine gun in action: in 1956, Czechoslovakia attempted to sell 2,500 such firearms to Jordan. (via Martin Smisek)

The vz. 52 rifle was manufactured at Považské strojárne in Považská Bystrica and Závody přesného strojírenství in Uherský Brod between 1952 and 1957. (via Martin Smisek)

army barracks in Zarqa between mostly Bedouin units loyal to the king and Arab nationalist units. After the incident, Hussein imposed martial law and disbanded Palestinian-dominated military units.

The rioting in Zarqa strained Jordan's relations with Syria and Egypt. Thus, Czechoslovak weapons that were to be delivered to Jordan in 1956 (listed in Table 30) remained in Syria. Jordan was also supposed to receive a supply of 20,000 newly manufactured vz. 52 rifles and 20 million vz. 52 rounds during 1957. However, this delivery was not carried out, for the same reason.[2]

COVER FROM CAIRO

A new opportunity for Prague to sell armaments to Jordan turned up in March 1964. Earlier that year, a Jordanian military delegation arrived in France to discuss possible deliveries of Mirage III fighters. One of the Jordanian officials, Ziad Mango, approached the Czechoslovak ambassador in Paris and asked him if Czechoslovakia would be willing to sell MiG fighters and heavy weapons to Jordan through the United Arab Republic (the official name of Egypt until 1971). This initiative was based on the resolution of a conference of Arab states that took place in January 1964, when Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Iraq decided to strengthen their armed forces because of Israeli intentions to change the flow of the Jordan River. According to information from Czechoslovak confidential sources in Lebanon, the governments of some Arab states expected problems with the acquisition of arms from Western states, including the United States. Therefore, they planned to carry out deals secretly, with the United Arab Republic acting as the middleman and publicly known recipient of the weapons. The respective states opted for this solution in order not to damage their international reputation because they were recipients of economic aid from some Western countries.

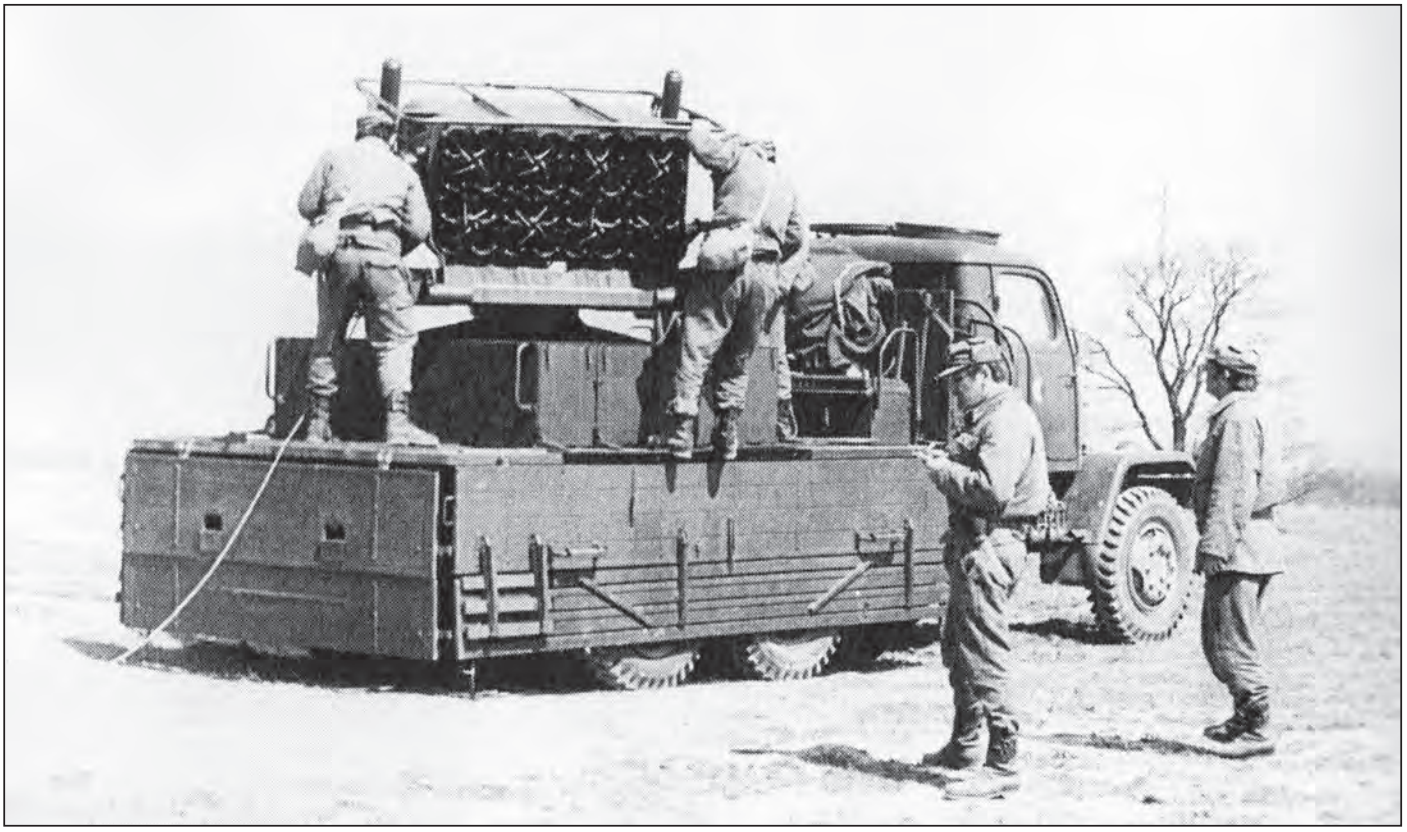
After receiving information from the Czechoslovak ambassador in Paris, the Ministry of Foreign Trade immediately went into action. Upon its consultation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Czechoslovak ambassador in Cairo was asked to inform Egyptian officials about the Jordanian scheme and find out if the United Arab Republic was ready to take part in the delivery of armaments to Jordan. In his dispatch from Cairo, the Czechoslovak ambassador informed Prague that Prime Minister Ali Sabri and President Gamal Abdel Nasser had no information about such a proposal, but both were more than willing to arrange the arms deliveries.

However, the Ministry of National Defence in Prague was not so optimistic because it had no surplus combat aircraft, tanks nor vehicles that could be readily provided for Jordan. Only outdated vz. 43 anti-tank guns and vz. 44 anti-aircraft guns could be offered. Thus, another prospect to sell armaments to Jordan was not fulfilled.[4]

BORDER DEMARCATION

On 9 August 1965, the Saudi and Jordanian governments signed an agreement for demarcation and rectification of a mutual border. At the same time, both countries performed a land swap, whereby Jordan gained an enlarged coastline (19km/12 miles) on the Gulf of Aqaba and 6,000 square kilometres (7,176 square yards) of territory in the interior. In turn, 7,000 square kilometres (8,371 square yards) of Jordanian-administered territory were ceded to Saudi Arabia. Subsequently, a tender for demarcation and mapping of the border territory was launched. The head of the Jordanian Land and Survey Department visited Prague in August and September 1966 and invited officials from the Geodesy and Cartography Institute (*Geodetický a kartografický ústav*) to take part in the tender.

Czechoslovak geographers were eager to do so. Although objections from the Saudis were expected, the Jordanians preferred the Czechoslovak institution over American or British competitors for financial and political reasons. Jordanian tender conditions required aerial photography of all boundary lines after



A vz. 51 multiple rocket launcher, designed and manufactured in Czechoslovakia, as offered to Jordan in the 1960s. (VÚA-VHA Praha)

TABLE 31: CZECHOSLOVAK ARMS APPROVED FOR DELIVERY TO JORDAN IN 1968 (UNREALISED)[7]

TYPE	NUMBER OF EXAMPLES	NOTE
vz. 51, 130mm multiple rocket launcher	28	from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army
vz. 53, 100mm anti-tank gun	12	from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army
130-JRRO-RM51, 130mm fragmentation rocket	15,000	for vz. 51 multiple rocket launcher, from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army
100-JOF-K53, 100mm high explosive tank round	10,000	for vz. 53 anti-tank gun, from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army

TABLE 32: KNOWN CZECHOSLOVAK ARMS EXPORT TO JORDAN, 1970–74[9]

TYPE	NUMBER OF EXAMPLES	YEAR OF DELIVERY	NOTE
vz. 58, 7.62mm assault rifle	2	1970	from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army
vz. 61, 7.65mm submachine gun	100	1970	from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army
ammunition for small arms	2,000,000	1970	from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army
	2,014,400	1971	from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army
P-27, light anti-tank weapon	30	1970	from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army
round for P-27	5,000	1970	from the stocks of the Czechoslovak People's Army

the demarcation had been completed. As the Geodesy and Cartography Institute had no photo mapping capacity of its own, its officials turned to the Czechoslovak Ministry of National Defence with a request for assistance in December 1966. At the end of the same month, an affirmative reply was provided. The Czechoslovak Air Force proposed to dispatch two Il-14T transport aircraft from the 1st Transport Airdrop Regiment (*1. dopravní výsadkový letecký pluk*) with appropriate camera equipment.

However, once again, the Czechoslovak effort met with failure. The final demarcation of the boundary between Jordan and Saudi Arabia was concluded on 29 January 1967 after a Japanese surveying company finished the placement of border markers.[5]

SMALL ARMS AND ARTILLERY

In 1965, Czechoslovakia delivered to Jordan samples of pyrotechnics worth 59,000 CSK, 5,000 CSK of sports

Another Czechoslovak weapon that had the potential and was offered, but never sold to Jordan was the vz. 53 anti-tank gun. (VÚA-VHA Praha)

firearms and ammunition for shooting sports worth 245,000 CSK. In June 1968, Sherif Nasir Ben Jamil, the chief military advisor of King Hussein, sent a request to the Main Technical Administration (*Hlavní technická správa*) of the Ministry of Foreign Trade for urgent delivery of multiple rocket launchers, anti-tank guns and related ammunition. Lieutenant General Karel Rusov, Chief of the General Staff of the Czechoslovak People's Army, duly approved all Jordanian demands (listed in Table 31), with the provision that all arms could be delivered in 1968. However, like in the past, no contract was awarded.[6]

Apparently, the only realised arms deal with Jordan until the end of the 1960s was related to the supply of 70 vz. 58 assault rifles in 1969. This delivery was followed by further supplies of infantry weapons during the next year, as listed in Table 32.[8]

During negotiations by King Hussein in Moscow in June 1976, the Soviets not only offered assistance in various sectors of the civilian economy but were ready to provide 'any amount of purely defensive types of military hardware' on condition of payment in cash and at full price. As expected, the Jordanian ruler rejected such a proposal.

Military relations between the armies of Czechoslovakia and Jordan remained basically non-existent until the fall of the communist regime in Prague. Possible winds of change began to blow in November 1984 when, after a private visit of Czechoslovakia undertaken by Major General Lawzi, Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the Jordanian Armed Forces, Jordan expressed interest in the exchange of military delegations and purchase of Czechoslovak armament. However, like many times before, the actual outcomes were minimal.[10]

BIBLIOGRAPHY

A full bibliography will be provided in a later volume of this mini-series

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1 An alliance formed in 1920 and 1921 by Czechoslovakia, Romania and the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (since 1929, Yugoslavia) with the purpose of common defence against Hungarian intentions to reverse the Treaty of Trianon and the prospect of a Habsburg restoration. This alliance was supported by France, which signed a corresponding treaty with each member country.

2 Francev, *Československé zbraně ve světě*, pp.11–12, 51–57, 63, 65–68, 75, 93–99.

3 NA, A ÚV KSČ, fond 1261/0/43 (Kancelář 1. tajemníka ÚV KSČ Antonína Novotného – I. část), karton 164, Informace o výrobě a vývoji vojenské techniky v ČSSR, vzájemných dodávkách mezi zeměmi socialistického tábora a dodávkách hospodářsky málo vyvinutým zemím. Francev, *Československé zbraně ve světě*, p.141. Jiří Rajlich, 70. výročí amerického náletu na Prahu 25. března 1945, *VHÚ*, http://www.vhu.cz/70-vyroci-americkeho-naletu-na-prahu-25-brezna-1945/ (accessed 13 June 2020).

4 NA, A ÚV KSČ, fond 1261/0/43 (Kancelář 1. tajemníka ÚV KSČ Antonína Novotného – I. část), karton 164, Informace o výrobě a vývoji vojenské techniky v ČSSR, vzájemných dodávkách mezi zeměmi socialistického tábora a dodávkách hospodářsky málo vyvinutým zemím. Bílek, Láník & Šach, *Československá armáda v prvním poválečném desetiletí*, p.53.

5 The Czechoslovak Army was renamed the Czechoslovak People's Army in 1954.

6 NA, A ÚV KSČ, fond 1261/0/43 (Kancelář 1. tajemníka ÚV KSČ Antonína Novotného – I. část), karton 164, Informace o výrobě a vývoji vojenské techniky v ČSSR, vzájemných dodávkách mezi zeměmi socialistického tábora a dodávkách hospodářsky málo vyvinutým zemím. Bílek, Láník & Šach, *Československá armáda v prvním poválečném desetiletí*, pp.90, 145–146, 148–149. Láník, *Vývoj čs. zbrojního průmyslu v druhé polovině 50. let minulého století*, pp.85–87.

7 VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1961, karton 453, sign. 30/4, Evidenční arch písemností zpracovaných pro vnitřní potřebu – Postgraduální školení a praxe akce 105 v ČSSR.

8 NA, A ÚV KSČ, fond 1261/0/43 (Kancelář 1. tajemníka ÚV KSČ Antonína Novotného – I. část), karton 165, K otázkám ve speciální oblasti. Zupko & Zupko, *Obrnená technika*, pp.15, 45, 69.

9 NA, A ÚV KSČ, Politické byro ÚV KSČ 1954-1962 (1261/0/11), sv. 174, ar.j. 238, bod 5, Koordinace výrobních plánů obranného průmyslu a vzájemných dodávek vojenské techniky, 2. května 1958. NA, A ÚV KSČ, fond 1261/0/43 (Kancelář 1. tajemníka ÚV KSČ Antonína Novotného – I. část), karton 164, Informace o výrobě a vývoji vojenské techniky v ČSSR, vzájemných dodávkách mezi zeměmi socialistického tábora a dodávkách hospodářsky málo vyvinutým zemím. Fučík, *Soumrak tankového věku*, pp.15, 17–18, 23.

10 Fučík, *Soumrak tankového věku*, pp.15, 18, 20.

11 Fojtík, *Albatros*, pp.10–14. Matoulek, '*Patnáctka' odešla před třiceti léty*, pp.54–56.

12 NA, A ÚV KSČ, fond 1261/0/43 (Kancelář 1. tajemníka ÚV KSČ Antonína Novotného – I. část), karton 164, Pamětní záznam, 30. srpna 1962. NA, A ÚV KSČ, fond 1261/0/43 (Kancelář 1. tajemníka ÚV KSČ Antonína Novotného – I. část), karton 165, Zajištění vývoje, výroby a dodávek cvičného letounu L 39 a návrh celkové koncepce leteckého průmyslu v ČSSR po roce 1968, 7. března 1966. NA, A ÚV KSČ, fond 1261/0/43 (Kancelář 1. tajemníka ÚV KSČ Antonína Novotného – I. část), karton 165, příloha k č.j. 00716/64-17, Kotázkám ve speciální oblasti.

13 NA, A ÚV KSČ, fond 1261/0/43 (Kancelář 1. tajemníka ÚV KSČ Antonína Novotného – I. část), karton 164, Informace o výrobě a vývoji vojenské techniky v ČSSR, vzájemných dodávkách mezi zeměmi socialistického tábora a dodávkách hospodářsky málo vyvinutým zemím. Fojtík, *Albatros*, pp.13–15, 42.

14 AMZV, GS-A 1945-1954, karton 207, Pamjatnaja zapiska, 7. června 1947. Dufek, Kaplan & Šlosar, Československo a Izrael 1947–1953, pp.40, 113–115.

15 AMZV, GS-A 1945-1954, karton 207, Přehled o zbrojních dodávkách vr. 1949. NA, A ÚV KSČ, Politické byro ÚV KSČ 1954-1962 (1261/0/11), sv. 6, ar.j. 8, bod 7, Zpráva o obchodních stycích s Habeší a plnění zvláštních dodávek habešské vládě, 19. července 1954.

16 NA, A ÚV KSČ, fond 1261/0/22 (Politický sekretariát ÚV KSČ 1951–1954), sv. 12, ar.j. 73, bod 13, Vývoz a dovoz výrobků zbrojního průmyslu a poskytování technické pomoci ve speciální výrobě, 6. prosince 1951. NA, A ÚV KSČ, fond 1261/0/44 (Kancelář 1. tajemníka ÚV KSČ Antonína Novotného – II. část), karton 85 (Čína), inv. č. 124, folio 110, Přehled hospodářských styků ČSSR s Čína a Albánie, 1962. VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1969, karton 173, Evidence GŠ/SMP-5 – vývozní skupina.

17 131/1936 Sb. Zákon ze dne 13. května 1936 o obraně státu.

18 Bulínová, Dufek, Kaplan & Šlosar, *Československo a Izrael v letech 1945-1956 – Dokumenty*, pp.100–101.

19 NA, A ÚV KSČ, fond 1261/0/22 (Politický sekretariát ÚV KSČ 1951–1954), sv. 18, ar.j. 86, bod 9, Administrativní řízení při povolování vývozu a dovozu u předmětů zbrojní výroby, 13. března 1952.

20 NA, A ÚV KSČ, fond 1261/0/22 (Politický sekretariát ÚV KSČ 1951-1954),sv. 52, ar.j. 137, bod 11b, Zpráva o závadách a nedostatcích, zjištěných v exportu sportovních zbraní a v evidenci výroby zbraní v závodě Jana Švermy v Brně, 23. ledna 1953. NA, A ÚV KSČ, Politické byro ÚV KSČ 1954-1962 (1261/0/11), sv. 5, ar.j. 7, bod 17, Návrh na změnu usnesení politického sekretariátu ÚV KSČ z 22. dubna 1953, týkající se zákazu vývozu civilních a sportovních letadel, náhradních motorů a dílů, bezmotorových letadel, sportovních, loveckých a civilních zbraní a střeliva k nim a jiného speciálního materiálu vojenské techniky do kapitalistických zemí, 8. července 1954. VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1953, karton 4, sign. 25/8/17, č.j. 0011015-OS, návrh nomenklatury – schválení, 25. června 1953.

21 VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1966, karton 188, sl. 1/15, č.j. 004192, Krycí označení akcí.

22 *Ibid*. Communist North Vietnam (Democratic Republic of Vietnam) received cover number 555.

23 AMZV, TO-T 1945-1954, Guatemala, karton 1, obal 2, č.j. 146.951, Guatemala – polit. zpráva (zájem o nákup zbraní), 1953. VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1962, karton 367, sign. 30/2/4, Souhrnné dokumenty o vývozu, Přehled o vývozu voj. techniky do kapitalistických států, 6. února 1959.

24 NA, A ÚV KSČ, Politické byro ÚV KSČ 1954-1962 (1261/0/11), sv. 21, ar.j. 29, bod 13, Schválení vývozu některých druhů zbraní a munice do Afghanistanu, 4. října 1954. NA, A ÚV KSČ, Politické byro ÚV KSČ 1954-1962 (1261/0/11), sv. 6, ar.j. 8, bod 7, Zpráva o obchodích stycích s Habeší a plnění zvláštních dodávek habešské vládě, 19. července 1954. NA, A ÚV KSČ, Politické byro ÚV KSČ 1954-1962 (1261/0/11), sv. 12, ar.j. 17, bod 4, Zpráva o vyrobených náhradních dílech /nářadí/ pro muniční stroje navrhované MZO k vývozu do Habeše, 23. srpna 1954. NA, A ÚV KSČ, Politické byro ÚV KSČ 1954-1962 (1261/0/11), sv. 34, ar.j. 44, bod 6, Povolení výjimky ze zákazu vývozu pistolí 7,65 do Egypta, 10. února 1955. NA, A ÚV KSČ, Politické byro ÚV KSČ 1954–1962 (1261/0/11), sv. 35, ar.j. 46, bod 4, Povolení výjimky ze zákazu vývozu pistolí 7,65 do Mexika, 21. února 1955. NA, A ÚV KSČ, Politické byro ÚV KSČ 1954-1962 (1261/0/11), sv. 46, ar.j. 63, bod 15, Schválení postupu při jednání se syrskou delegací o uzavření smlouvy na dodávky speciálních materiálů z ČSR do Sýrie, 11. června 1955.

25 NA, A ÚV KSČ, Politické byro ÚV KSČ 1954-1962 (1261/0/11), sv. 27, ar.j. 37, bod 7, Předběžný návrh plánu vývozu a dovozu zbrojních materiálů a technické dokumentace v roce 1955, 20. prosince 1954. NA, A ÚV KSČ, Politické byro ÚV KSČ 1954-1962 (1261/0/11), sv. 29, ar.j. 38, bod 38, Návrh na vytvoření devisové reservy vývozem vojenské techniky do hospodářsky málo vyvinutých zemí, 8. ledna 1955.

26 NA, A ÚV KSČ, Politické byro ÚV KSČ 1954-1962 (1261/0/11), sv. 58, ar.j. 73, bod 12, Postup při plánování a provádění dovozu a vývozu výrobků vojenské techniky, speciálních materiálů, strojů, přístrojů a zařízení, 16. srpna 1955.

27 NA, A ÚV KSČ, Politické byro ÚV KSČ 1954-1962 (1261/0/11), sv. 104, ar.j. 121, bod 27, Vývoz speciálního materiálu do kapitalistických států, 2. června 1956.

28 NA, A ÚV KSČ, Politické byro ÚV KSČ 1954-1962 (1261/0/11), sv. 280, ar.j. 363, bod 5, Směrnice pro vývoz speciálního materiálu, 12. října 1960.

29 Czechoslovak designation of German *Karabiner 98k*.

30 VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1964, karton 21, sign. 24/5/1, č.j. 0010870/sekr.min.-1964, Návrh na úpravu směrnic pro vývoz speciálního materiálu, 25. března 1964. Cooper, *Hot Skies over Yemen – Volume 1*, p.17.

31 NA, A ÚV KSČ, fond 1261/0/4 (Předsednictvo ÚV KSČ 1962–1966), sv. 32, ar.j. 34, bod 4, Rozšíření směrnic pro vývoz speciálního materiálu, 9. srpna

1963. VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1963, karton 21, sign. 24/5/1, č.j. 0049112, Zpráva o rozšíření směrnic pro vývoz speciálního materiálu, 12. července 1963.

32 NA, A ÚV KSČ, fond 1261/0/4 (Předsednictvo ÚV KSČ 1962–1966), sv. 61, ar.j. 65, bod 3, Rozšíření a úprava směrnic pro vývoz speciálního materiálu, 22. dubna 1964. VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1964, karton 21, sign. 24/5/1, č.j. 0010870/sekr.min.-1964, Návrh na úpravu směrnic pro vývoz speciálního materiálu, 25. března 1964.

33 NA, A ÚV KSČ, fond 1261/0/4 (Předsednictvo ÚV KSČ 1962-1966), sv. 71, ar.j. 75, bod 6, Dodávky speciálních materiálů spojenému velení Ligy arabských zemí, 8. července 1964.

34 VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1965, karton 233, sign. L/13, č.j. 0052109/HTS-05, Zpráva k návrhu na další rozšíření nomenklatury pěchotních zbraní pro vývoz do KS, 2. února 1965.

35 VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1965, karton 233, sign. L/13, č.j. 0052109/HTS-05, Zpráva k návrhu na další rozšíření nomenklatury pěchotních zbraní pro vývoz do KS, 2. února 1965.

36 NA, A ÚV KSČ, fond 1261/0/5 (Předsednictvo ÚV KSČ 1966-1971), sv. 1, ar.j. 1, bod 5, Úprava směrnic pro vývoz speciálního materiálu, 16. května 1966. VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1966, karton 34, sl. 24/5/1-11, č.j. 016514, Směrnice pro vývoz speciálního mateteriálu, březen 1966.

37 VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1970, karton 143, sl. 30/56, Usnesení vlády č. 374/1968 a Zásady pro obchod se speciálním materiálem.

38 VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1963, karton 175, sign. 5/8-38, č.j. 022072, Zabezpečení ČSLA materiálem dělostřeleckého vyzbrojování, dováženým ze zahraničí, jak v míru tak i za války, 1963. Burian & Matula, *75 úspěšných let*, p.9.

39 NA, A ÚV KSČ, fond 1261/0/22 (Politický sekretariát ÚV KSČ 1951-1954), sv. 8, ar.j. 63, bod 5, Zřízení technického oddělení na MZO, 4. října 1951. NA, A ÚV KSČ, fond 1261/0/22 (Politický sekretariát ÚV KSČ 1951–1954), sv. 12, ar.j. 73, bod 13, Vývoz a dovoz výrobků zbrojního průmyslu a poskytování technické pomoci ve speciální výrobě, 6. prosince 1951. VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1956, karton 520, sign. 26-7/70, Statut ministerstva zahraničního obchodu hlavní technické správy. Burian & Matula, *75 úspěšných let*, p.31.

40 NA, A ÚV KSČ, Politické byro ÚV KSČ 1954-1962 (1261/0/11), sv. 218-219, ar.j. 297, bod 4, Opatření k odstranění závad zjištěných při dodávce speciální techniky lodí „Lidice" do Maroka, 29. května 1959. NA, A ÚV KSČ, Politické byro ÚV KSČ 1954-1962 (1261/0/11), sv. 254, ar.j. 338, bod 8, Činnost a organizační zásady hlavní technické správy ministerstva zahraničního obchodu, 28. března 1960.

41 Zídek, *Československo a francouzská Afrika*, p.201.

42 NA, A ÚV KSČ, fond 1261/0/4 (Předsednictvo ÚV KSČ 1962-1966), sv. 107, ar.j. 110, bod 2, Zásady pro uzavírání aktivních licenčních smluv na zbrojní výrobky a vojensko-technický materiál do nesocialistických zemí, 10. května 1965. Zídek, *Československo a francouzská Afrika*, p.32.

43 VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1966, karton 188, sl. 1/15, Hmotný rozsah a struktura dodávek vojensko-technického materiálu vcelku a podle jednotlivých akcí.

44 VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1977, karton 112, č.j. 006141/SÚP, Kuba.

45 VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1964, karton 22, sign. 24/5/1-30, č.j. 0050928/HTS-05, Zpráva o výsledcích průzkumu možností odbytu speciálního materiálu, 30. června 1964.

46 NA, A ÚV KSČ, fond 1261/0/44 (Kancelář 1. tajemníka ÚV KSČ Antonína Novotného – II. část), karton 70 (Alžírsko). NA, A ÚV KSČ, fond 1261/0/44 (Kancelář 1. tajemníka ÚV KSČ Antonína Novotného – II. část), karton 71 (Angola). NA, A ÚV KSČ, fond 1261/0/44 (Kancelář 1. tajemníka ÚV KSČ Antonína Novotného – II. část), karton 111 (Jihoafrická republika). NA, A ÚV KSČ, fond 1261/0/44 (Kancelář 1. tajemníka ÚV KSČ Antonína Novotného – II. část), karton 138 (Mosambik). NA, A ÚV KSČ, fond 1261/0/44 (Kancelář 1. tajemníka ÚV KSČ Antonína Novotného – II. část), karton 166 (Portugalská Guinea). NA, A ÚV KSČ, fond 1261/0/44 (Kancelář 1. tajemníka ÚV KSČ Antonína Novotného – II. část), karton 230 (Zimbabwe).

47 VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1980, karton 289, č.j. 4866, Návštěva delegace ČSLA ve Vietnamské socialistické republice.

48 VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1966, karton 245, sl. J/8, Technická pomoc poskytovaná ČSSR ozbrojeným silám rozvojových zemí.

49 VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1967, karton 139, sl. 30/10, č.j. 0070848/67, Význam dosavadních vývozů speciální techniky do nesocialistických států pro čs. národní hospodářství.

50 NA, A ÚV KSČ, fond 1261/0/7 (Předsednictvo ÚV KSČ 1976-1981), sv. 121, ar.j. 121, bod 4, Zpráva o poskytování technické pomoci ve speciální oblasti nesocialistickým zemím a návrhy na opatření v dalších obdobích, 22. října 1979.

51 Bílek, Láník & Šach, *Československá armáda v prvním poválečném desetiletí*, pp.105–106.

52 VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1967, karton 160, sl. 31K-23, č.j. 004479/43, Zpráva o technické pomoci, říjen 1965.

53 *Ibid*.

54 VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1957, karton 621, sign. 38/10-6, č.j. 0010493, Organizace taktického školení egyptských důstojníků, 30. září 1957.

55 VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1968, karton 80, sl. 31K-37, č.j. 0013637/SZS/GŠ, Rozbor technické pomoci podle Sb. MNO č. 08 ze dne 5.8.1968.

56 *Ibid*. Vondrášek, Chrastil & Markel, *Dějiny Vojenské akademie v Brně 1951 – 2001*, pp.74–77.

57 NA, A ÚV KSČ, fond 1261/0/7 (Předsednictvo ÚV KSČ 1976-1981), sv. 121, ar.j. 121, bod 4, Zpráva o poskytování technické pomoci ve speciální oblasti nesocialistickým zemím a návrhy na opatření v dalších obdobích, 22. října 1979.

58 *Ibid*.

59 *Ibid*.

60 NA, A ÚV KSČ, fond 1261/0/5 (Předsednictvo ÚV KSČ 1966-1971), sv. 47, ar.j. 49, bod 5, Zpráva o možnostech krytí požadavků na vývoz speciální techniky, 26. října 1967.

61 Francev, *Československé tankové síly*, pp.161–163.

62 Within the frame of the federalisation of Czechoslovakia, the Czech Socialist Republic and Slovak Socialist Republic were established on 1 January 1969. This was associated with renaming of ministries with statewide authority that earned the word Federal in their official titles.

63 VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1971, karton 143, sl. 30/17, krycí čísla zemí, 3. května 1971.

64 *Ibid*.

65 VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1979, karton 183, č.j. 04121, k č.j. 004121-16/14-1979, Zpráva o realizaci vývozu a technické pomoci za IV. čtvrtletí 1979.

66 NA, A ÚV KSČ, fond 1261/0/7 (Předsednictvo ÚV KSČ 1976-1981), P 128/80, bod 14, Statut o koordinaci činnosti členských států Varšavské smlouvy při uskutečňování vojenskotechnické spolupráce s rozvojovými zeměmi, 11. ledna 1980.

67 Baka, *Československá vojenská pomoc Líbyi v prvej polovici osemdesiatych rokov 20. storočia*, p.44. Francev, *Československé tankové síly*, p.163.

68 NA, A ÚV KSČ, fond 1261/0/5 (Předsednictvo ÚV KSČ 1966-1971), sv. 47, ar.j. 49, bod 5, Zpráva o možnostech krytí požadavků na vývoz speciální techniky, 26. října 1967.

69 NA, A ÚV KSČ, fond 1261/0/8 (Předsednictvo ÚV KSČ 1981-1986), P 43/82, bod 3, Zvláštní část pětiletého státního plánu rozvoje národního hospodářství ČSSR na léta 1981-1985 a směrnice pro vypracování prováděcího státního plánu na rok 1983 – obrana a bezpečnost, 22. června 1982.

70 Ivánek, *Ekonomické aspekty konverze české (československé) zbrojní výroby*, p.133. Jaroslav Láník, Konverze zbrojního průmyslu aneb ČSSR jako exportér, *VHÚ*, http://www.vhu.cz/konverze-zbrojniho-prumyslu-aneb-cssr-jako-exporter/ (accessed 11 July 2020).

71 NA, A ÚV KSČ, fond 1261/0/9 (Předsednictvo ÚV KSČ 1986-1989), P 96/88, bod 10, Informace o současném stavu využívání kapacit pro speciální výrobu, civilní výrobu a kapacit v n. p. BAZ, Bratislava, 5. prosince 1988.

72 NA, A ÚV KSČ, fond 1261/0/9 (Předsednictvo ÚV KSČ 1986-1989), P 112/89, bod 5, Informace o jednání s místopředsedou rady ministrů SSSR s I. S. BĚLOUSOVEM o dodávkách speciální techniky do SSSR v období 1991–1995, 13. dubna 1989.

73 Zídek & Sieber, *Československo a Blízký východ v letech 1948–1989*, pp.15–20.

74 NA, A ÚV KSČ, fond 1261/0/44 (Kancelář 1. tajemníka ÚV KSČ Antonína Novotného – II. část), karton 105 (Irák), inv. č. 193, folio 21, Telegramy, šifry, depeše ZÚ (1959) 1961–1964 (1967).

75 VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1965, karton 233, sign. L/115, č.j. 0430/1965, Zpráva o předvádění pěchotních zbraní – předložení, 23. června 1965. VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1969, karton 211, sign. 31D-34, č.j. 020922/SZS, návštěva náčelníka generálního štábu Kuweitu v ČSSR, 24. července 1969.

76 VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1977, karton 113, č.j. 06141, č.j. 07172/SÚP, Výstavba vojenského letiště v Kuwaitu, 7. listopadu 1973.

77 VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1967, karton 161, sl. 31/L98, Dodávkové příkazy ročník 1967. VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1968, karton 62, sl. 30-3/3, Výkazy jmenovitých položek za I. – IV. čtvrtletí 1964, 19. února 1965. VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1967, karton 158, sl. 27/1/2, č.j. 00750/10-67, Komplexní rozbor zahraničních styků MNO v r. 1966, 10. dubna 1967. VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1968, karton 80, sl. 22/1, č.j. 012297/68, Komplexní rozbor zahraničních styků ministerstva

národní obrany, uskutečněných v roce 1967, 11. března 1968. VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1969, karton 27, sl. 7/1-1, č.j. 020659, Komplexní rozbor zahraničních styků ministerstva národní obrany, uskutečněných v roce 1968, 28. března 1969. VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1974, karton 120, sl. 84/14, č.j. 008069/12-FMNO/14-1974, Přehled zahraničních odběratelů speciálního materiálu z ČSSR v letech 1970-1974. VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1969, karton 211, sign. 31D-34, č.j. 020922/SZS, návštěva náčelníka generálního štábu Kuweitu v ČSSR, 24. července 1969.

78 Zídek & Sieber, *Československo a Blízký východ v letech 1948–1989*, p.187.

79 VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1964, karton 22, sign. 24/5/1-30, č.j. 0050928/HTS-05, Zpráva o výsledcích průzkumu možností odbytu speciálního materiálu, 30. června 1964.

80 VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1968, karton 62, sl. 30-3/3, Výkazy jmenovitých položek za I. – IV. čtvrtletí 1965, 29. ledna 1966. VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1970, karton 143, sl. 30, Vývoz do KS. VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1974, karton 120, sl. 84/14, č.j. 008069/12-FMNO/14-1974, Přehled zahraničních odběratelů speciálního materiálu z ČSSR v letech 1970–1974.

81 NA, A ÚV KSČ, fond 1261/0/44 (Kancelář 1. tajemníka ÚV KSČ Antonína Novotného – II. část), karton 125 (Libanon), inv. č. 286, folio 9, Zpráva MZO o zadržení československého letadla v Bejrútu s nákladem zbraní, 1965. NA, A ÚV KSČ, fond 1261/0/44 (Kancelář 1. tajemníka ÚV KSČ Antonína Novotného – II. část), karton 125 (Libanon), inv. č. 286, folio 11, Telegramy, zprávy, depeše ZÚ, 1964–1966.

82 MNO, 1969, SUP, karton 206 a 207, sl. 30/25, Kontrakt č. 112/9824 – staré vojenské pláště – 60.000 ks, 25. října 1969.

83 Zídek & Sieber, *Československo a Blízký východ v letech 1948–1989*, p.189.

84 VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1973, karton 100, sl. 53/3, Akce 99 – přehled písemností, Telegram z Bejrútu, 13. října 1973.

85 VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1975, karton 12, sl. 85/19, k č.j. 001949/SÚP-1975, Uvolnění pistolí a nábojů pro ÚV KSČ, 11. srpna 1975.

86 Zídek & Sieber, *Československo a Blízký východ v letech 1948–1989*, p.190.

87 VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1968, karton 62, sl. 30-3/3, Výkazy jmenovitých položek za I. – IV. čtvrtletí 1964, 19. února 1965. VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1967, karton 158, sl. 27/1/2, č.j. 00750/10-67, Komplexní rozbor zahraničních styků MNO v r. 1966, 10. dubna 1967. VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1968, karton 80, sl. 22/1, č.j. 012297/68, Komplexní rozbor zahraničních styků ministerstva národní obrany, uskutečněných v roce 1967, 11. března 1968. VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1969, karton 27, sl. 7/1-1, č.j. 020659, Komplexní rozbor zahraničních styků ministerstva národní obrany, uskutečněných v roce 1968, 28. března 1969. VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1974, karton 120, sl. 84/14, č.j. 008069/12-FMNO/14-1974, Přehled zahraničních odběratelů speciálního materiálu z ČSSR v letech 1970–1974.

88 Zídek & Sieber, *Československo a Blízký východ v letech 1948–1989*, p.184. VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1967, karton 161, sl. 31/L98, Dodávkové příkazy ročník 1967.

89 VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1970, karton 143, sl. 30/56, dopis Ministerstva zahraničního obchodu, 17. dubna 1968.

90 VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1964, karton 326, sign. K/10, č.j. 003076/OTP, Souhrnná zpráva o poskytování technické pomoci HMVZ za rok 1963, únor 1964. VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1968, karton 62, sl. 30-3/3, Výkazy jmenovitých položek za I. – IV. čtvrtletí 1964, 19. února 1965. VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1967, karton 158, sl. 27/1/2, č.j. 00750/10-67, Komplexní rozbor zahraničních styků MNO v r. 1966, 10. dubna 1967. VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1968, karton 80, sl. 22/1, č.j. 012297/68, Komplexní rozbor zahraničních styků ministerstva národní obrany, uskutečněných v roce 1967, 11. března 1968. VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1969, karton 27, sl. 7/1-1, č.j. 020659, Komplexní rozbor zahraničních styků ministerstva národní obrany, uskutečněných v roce 1968, 28. března 1969. VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1974, karton 120, sl. 84/14, č.j. 008069/12-FMNO/14-1974, Přehled zahraničních odběratelů speciálního materiálu z ČSSR v letech 1970–1974.

91 Zídek & Sieber, *Československo a Blízký východ v letech 1948–1989*, p.259. NA, A ÚV KSČ, fond 1261/0/44 (Kancelář 1. tajemníka ÚV KSČ Antonína Novotného – II. část), karton 178 (Saudská Arábie), inv. č. 423, folio 1, Návštěva ministra obrany Saudské Arábie Mohameda Ben Sauda v ČSSR (možnost prodeje zbraní), 1962.

92 NA, A ÚV KSČ, fond 1261/0/43 (Kancelář 1. tajemníka ÚV KSČ Antonína Novotného – I. část), karton 158, inv. č. 216, Dodávky speciálního materiálu rozvojovým zemím 1955, 1957.

93 NA, A ÚV KSČ, fond 1261/0/44 (Kancelář 1. tajemníka ÚV KSČ Antonína Novotného – II. část), karton 125 (Libanon), inv. č. 286, folio 11, Telegramy, zprávy, depeše ZÚ. 1961-1962, 1964-1966. NA, A ÚV KSČ, fond 1261/0/44 (Kancelář 1. tajemníka ÚV KSČ Antonína Novotného – II. část), karton 178 (Saudská Arábie), inv. č. 423, folio 1, Návštěva ministra obrany Saudské Arábie Mohameda Ben Sauda v ČSSR (možnost prodeje zbraní), 1962. NA, A ÚV KSČ, fond 1261/0/44 (Kancelář 1. tajemníka ÚV KSČ Antonína Novotného – II. část), karton 178 (Saudská Arábie), inv. č. 423, folio 3, Telegramy, šifry ZÚ (ZÚ v Ankaře), 1961.

94 VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1964, karton 326, sign. K/10, č.j. 003076/OTP, Souhrnná zpráva o poskytování technické pomoci HMVZ za rok 1963, únor 1964.

95 NA, A ÚV KSČ, fond 1261/0/4 (Předsednictvo ÚV KSČ 1962-1966), sv. 61, ar.j. 65, bod 3, Rozšíření a úprava směrnic pro vývoz speciálního materiálu, 22. dubna 1964.

96 VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1964, karton 326, sign. K/10, č.j. 003076/OTP, Souhrnná zpráva o poskytování technické pomoci HMVZ za rok 1963, únor 1964. VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1968, karton 62, sl. 30-3/3, Výkazy jmenovitých položek za I. – IV. čtvrtletí 1964, 19. února 1965. VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1967, karton 158, sl. 27/1/2, č.j. 00750/10-67, Komplexní rozbor zahraničních styků MNO v r. 1966, 10. dubna 1967. VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1968, karton 80, sl. 22/1, č.j. 012297/68, Komplexní rozbor zahraničních styků ministerstva národní obrany, uskutečněných v roce 1967, 11. března 1968. VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1969, karton 27, sl. 7/1-1, č.j. 020659, Komplexní rozbor zahraničních styků ministerstva národní obrany, uskutečněných v roce 1968, 28. března 1969. VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1974, karton 120, sl. 84/14, č.j. 008069/12-FMNO/14-1974, Přehled zahraničních odběratelů speciálního materiálu z ČSSR v letech 1970–1974.

97 Zídek & Sieber, *Československo a Blízký východ v letech 1948–1989*, p.292.

98 *Ibid*. VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1957, karton 397, sign. 30/2/5/12, č.j. 0010447/57-25-01, opis zprávy pro náměstkyni předsedy vlády, 29. ledna 1957.

99 VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1960, karton 460, sign. 30-2/150, č.j. 078106/60, kopie dopisu pro prvního náměstka ministra zahraničních věcí, 16. prosince 1960. VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1962, sign. 30-2/50, Zpráva k průběhu a dalšímu zaměření hospodářské a technické pomoci hospodářsky málo vyvinutým zemím ve speciální oblasti.

100 VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1961, karton 341, sign. 40/1/1, č.j. 13935-sekr. NGŠ/1961, Letecké snímkování v Tunisu, 21. červen 1961.

101 NA, A ÚV KSČ, fond 1261/0/44 (Kancelář 1. tajemníka ÚV KSČ Antonína Novotného – II. část), karton 223 (Tunisko), inv. č. 535, folio 14 Telegramy, zprávy, šifry ZÚ, 1961.

102 VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1961, karton 78, sign. 38/3-176, č.j. 04926/OŘV 1961, Možnosti a podmínky výcviku tuniských dopravních pilotů, 16. říjen 1961. VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1961, karton 456, sign. 30/4/4/109, Technická pomoc pro Tuniskou republiku, 31. října 1961.

103 VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1964, karton 22, sign. 24/5/1-30, č.j. 0050928/HTS-05, Zpráva o výsledcích průzkumu možností odbytu speciálního materiálu, 30. června 1964.

104 VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1962, karton 367, sign. 30-2/4, Vyhodnocení dodávek speciálního materiálu pro vývoz ze zásob MNO v r. 1961. VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1968, karton 62, sl. 30-3/3, Výkazy jmenovitých položek za I. – IV. čtvrtletí 1964, 19. února 1965. VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1967, karton 158, sl. 27/1/2, č.j. 00750/10-67, Komplexní rozbor zahraničních styků MNO v r. 1966, 10. dubna 1967. VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1968, karton 80, sl. 22/1, č.j. 012297/68, Komplexní rozbor zahraničních styků ministerstva národní obrany, uskutečněných v roce 1967, 11. března 1968. VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1969, karton 27, sl. 7/1-1, č.j. 020659, Komplexní rozbor zahraničních styků ministerstva národní obrany, uskutečněných v roce 1968, 28. března 1969. VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1974, karton 120, sl. 84/14, č.j. 008069/12-FMNO/14-1974, Přehled zahraničních odběratelů speciálního materiálu z ČSSR v letech 1970–1974.

105 Fojtík, *Albatros*, pp.170–171.

106 Zídek & Sieber, *Československo a Blízký východ v letech 1948–1989*, p.260.

107 VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1967, karton 161, sl. 31/L98, Dodávkové příkazy ročník 1967. VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1968, karton 62, sl. 30-3/3, Výkazy jmenovitých položek za I. – IV. čtvrtletí 1964, 19. února 1965. VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1967, karton 158, sl. 27/1/2, č.j. 00750/10-67, Komplexní rozbor zahraničních styků MNO v r. 1966, 10. dubna 1967. VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1968, karton 80, sl. 22/1, č.j. 012297/68, Komplexní rozbor zahraničních styků ministerstva národní obrany, uskutečněných v roce 1967, 11. března 1968. VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1969, karton 27, sl. 7/1-1, č.j. 020659, Komplexní rozbor zahraničních styků ministerstva národní obrany, uskutečněných v roce 1968, 28. března 1969. VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1974, karton 120, sl. 84/14, č.j. 008069/12-FMNO/14-1974, Přehled zahraničních odběratelů speciálního materiálu z ČSSR v letech 1970–1974.

108 VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1965, karton 233, sign. L/115, č.j. 0430/1965, Zpráva o předvádění pěchotních zbraní – předložení, 23. června 1965.

109 NA, A ÚV KSČ, fond 1261/0/44 (Kancelář 1. tajemníka ÚV KSČ Antonína Novotného – II. část), karton 125 (Libanon), inv. č. 286, folio 10, Zpráva MZV o návštěvě předsedy Organizace pro osvobození Palestiny Ahmada Šukejrího v ČSSR (dopis MZV s pozváním), 1965. Zídek & Sieber, *Československo a Blízký východ v letech 1948–1989*, pp.234–235.
110 VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1975, karton 146, č.j. 01462, Návštěva Jásira Arafata v ČSSR. VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1977, karton 113, č.j. 06141, č.j. 01101-42/SÚP-1975, Příprava zásilky pěchotní munice, 3. července 1975. Zídek & Sieber, *Československo a Blízký východ v letech 1948–1989*, p.238.
111 MNO, 1978, karton 206, č.j. 08052, Materiálová pomoc pro OOP. Zídek & Sieber, *Československo a Blízký východ v letech 1948–1989*, pp.238–239.
112 Zídek & Sieber, *Československo a Blízký východ v letech 1948–1989*, pp.239–241.
113 AMZV, TO-T 1980–1989, Palestina, karton 1, obal 2, Záznam o návštěvě, 25. ledna 1982. Zídek & Sieber, *Československo a Blízký východ v letech 1948–1989*, p.247.
114 Zídek & Sieber, *Československo a Blízký východ v letech 1948–1989*, p.248.
115 AMZV, TO-T 1980-1989, Jemenská lidová demokratická republika, karton 4, obal 12, č.j. 012.770/85-8, ZÚ Aden – zaslání protokolu o předání pomoci pro LM JLDR, 30. května 1985.
116 AMZV, TO-T 1980–1989, Palestina, karton 1, obal 2, č.j. 011008/86, Záznam o návštěvě, 24. února 1986.
117 NA, A ÚV KSČ, fond 1261/0/9 (Předsednictvo ÚV KSČ 1986–1989), P 77/88, k informaci bod 12, Informace o průběhu a výsledcích návštěvy delegace výkonného výboru OOP v čele s jeho předsedou Jásirem Arafatem v ČSSR ve dnech 27. – 29.6.1988.
118 AMZV, TO-T 1980-1989, Jemenská lidová demokratická republika, karton 4, obal 12, č.j. 012.770/85-8, ZÚ Aden – zaslání protokolu o předání pomoci pro LM JLDR, 30. května 1985. VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1977, karton 113, č.j. 06141, č.j. 01101-42/SÚP-1975, Příprava zásilky pěchotní munice, 3. července 1975. Zídek & Sieber, *Československo a Blízký východ v letech 1948–1989*, p.247.

CHAPTER 1

1 Dufek, Kaplan & Šlosar, *Československo a Izrael 1947–1953*, pp.9–11.
2 Zídek & Sieber, *Československo a Blízký východ v letech 1948–1989*, p.129.
3 Zídek & Sieber, *Československo a Blízký východ v letech 1948–1989*, p.128.
4 Dufek, Kaplan & Šlosar, *Československo a Izrael 1947–1953*, pp.18, 40, 47, 113.
5 Dufek, Kaplan & Šlosar, *Československo a Izrael 1947–1953*, pp.42, 115–116, 131.
6 Bulínová, Dufek, Kaplan & Šlosar, *Československo a Izrael v letech 1945–1956 – Dokumenty*, pp.79–80. Dufek, Kaplan & Šlosar, *Československo a Izrael 1947–1953*, pp.115–116. Francev, *Československé zbraně ve světě*, p.150.
7 Dufek, Kaplan & Šlosar, *Československo a Izrael 1947–1953*, p.116.
8 Krammer, *L'aide militaire tchèque à Israël, 1948*, pp.162–165. Dufek, Kaplan & Šlosar, *Československo a Izrael 1947–1953*, pp.123–125.
9 Dufek, Kaplan & Šlosar, *Československo a Izrael 1947–1953*, pp.123–126. Hellebrand & Radina, *Chel Ha Avir*, pp.14–16, 19.
10 Dufek, Kaplan & Šlosar, *Československo a Izrael 1947–1953*, pp.127–130. Hellebrand & Radina, *Chel Ha Avir*, pp.25–26.
11 Bulínová, Dufek, Kaplan & Šlosar, *Československo a Izrael v letech 1945–1956 – Dokumenty*, pp.82–83, 87–88. Dufek, Kaplan & Šlosar, *Československo a Izrael 1947–1953*, pp.125–126, 142–143.
12 Dufek, Kaplan & Šlosar, *Československo a Izrael 1947–1953*, p.145.
13 Bulínová, Dufek, Kaplan & Šlosar, *Československo a Izrael v letech 1945–1956 – Dokumenty*, pp.89–97, 104. Dufek, Kaplan & Šlosar, *Československo a Izrael 1947–1953*, pp.125–126, 142–143. Hellebrand & Radina, *Chel Ha Avir*, pp.23–25. Aloni, *101 – Israeli Air Force First Fighter Squadron*, pp.6–12.
14 Dufek, Kaplan & Šlosar, *Československo a Izrael 1947–1953*, pp.143-144.
15 *Ibid*., pp.145, 147.
16 Dufek, Kaplan & Šlosar, *Československo a Izrael 1947–1953*, pp.145–146.
17 Dufek, Kaplan & Šlosar, *Československo a Izrael 1947–1953*, p.143. Aloni & Avidror, *Hammers*, pp.9–15.
18 The Table of Cruises to Israel of the Weapon Ships in the War of Independence (in Hebrew), *Palyam*, http://www.palyam.org/OniyotRekhesh/armsShipsTable.pdf (accessed 30 November 2019).
19 Dufek, Kaplan & Šlosar, *Československo a Izrael 1947–1953*, pp.132–144.
20 Francev, *Československé zbraně ve světě*, p.149.
21 Dufek, Kaplan & Šlosar, *Československo a Izrael 1947–1953*, p.131.
22 Dufek, Kaplan & Šlosar, *Československo a Izrael 1947–1953*, pp.136–137.
23 Dufek, Kaplan & Šlosar, *Československo a Izrael 1947–1953*, p.140.
24 Dufek, Kaplan & Šlosar, *Československo a Izrael 1947–1953*, pp.147–148. Irra, *'Spitfajr'*, p.60.
25 Dufek, Kaplan & Šlosar, *Československo a Izrael 1947–1953*, p.146.
26 *Ibid*.
27 Bulínová, Dufek, Kaplan & Šlosar, *Československo a Izrael v letech 1945–1956 – Dokumenty*, pp.221–226, 234–35. Dufek, Kaplan & Šlosar, *Československo a Izrael 1947–1953*, pp.147–151. Aloni, *101 – Israeli Air Force First Fighter Squadron*, pp.25–28, 36–40. Irra, *'Spitfajr'*, pp.61–62. Rajlich, *Na nebi hrdého Albionu 6.část (1945–1946)*, pp.514–519.
28 Bulínová, Dufek, Kaplan & Šlosar, *Československo a Izrael v letech 1945–1956 – Dokumenty*, pp.130–132, 180–83. Dufek, Kaplan & Šlosar, *Československo a Izrael 1947–1953*, pp.155–162. Aloni, *101 – Israeli Air Force First Fighter Squadron*, pp.6–7. Irra, *Československé vojenské letectvo 1945–1950* – Díl I, pp.197–199. Hellebrand & Radina, *Chel Ha Avir*, pp.26–28.
29 Dufek, Kaplan & Šlosar, *Československo a Izrael 1947–1953*, pp.162–164. Irra, *Československé vojenské letectvo 1945–1950* – Díl I, p.199.
30 Bulínová, Dufek, Kaplan & Šlosar, *Československo a Izrael v letech 1945–1956 – Dokumenty*, pp.132–133, 150–153. Dufek, Kaplan & Šlosar, *Československo a Izrael 1947–1953*, pp.165–172. Pejčoch, *Výcvik příslušníků brigády Hagana v Československu*, pp.5–7.
31 Bulínová, Dufek, Kaplan & Šlosar, *Československo a Izrael v letech 1945–1956 – Dokumenty*, pp.153–158, 159–161, 163–170, 191–193. Dufek, Kaplan & Šlosar, *Československo a Izrael 1947–1953*, pp.59–80, 174–188. Pejčoch, *Výcvik příslušníků brigády Hagana v Československu*, pp.8–18.
32 Pejčoch, *Výcvik příslušníků brigády Hagana v Československu*, p.7.
33 Dufek, Kaplan & Šlosar, *Československo a Izrael 1947–1953*, p.140.
34 Bulínová, Dufek, Kaplan & Šlosar, *Československo a Izrael v letech 1945–1956 – Dokumenty*, pp.217–218. Dufek, Kaplan & Šlosar, *Československo a Izrael 1947–1953*, pp.81–89, 132, 138–139, 151–152.
35 AMZV, TO-O 1945–1959, Izrael, karton 4, č. 120.003/53, Československo-izraelské obchodní styky, 1953.
36 Zídek & Sieber, *Československo a Blízký východ v letech 1948–1989*, pp.143–144.
37 Levy, *T-54/5 to IDF Tiran 4/5*, pp.13–14.
38 Within the frame of the federalisation of Czechoslovakia, the Czech Socialist Republic and the Slovak Socialist Republic were established on 1 January 1969. This was associated with renaming of ministries with statewide authority that added the word 'Federal' to their official titles.
39 VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1970, karton 144, sl. 30/3-17, obal B, Vývoz do PLR – Vývoz polských motorů Wola 5Va do KS.

CHAPTER 2

1 Zídek & Sieber, *Československo a Blízký východ v letech 1948–1989*, pp.178–179.
2 NA, A ÚV KSČ, Politické byro ÚV KSČ 1954-1962 (1261/0/11), sv. 116, ar.j. 139, bod 23, Věc: požadavek syrské vlády na dodávku pěchotních a dělostřeleckých zbraní pro Jordánsko z Československa, 17. září 1956. VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1956, karton 523, sign. 26/7/7/470, č.j. 0041325, Zpráva o plnění úkolů spojených s vývozem vojenské techniky, říjen 1956. VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1962, karton 369, sign. 30-2/4, Souhrnné dokumenty o vývozu, Přehled o vývozu vojenské techniky do kapitalistických států, 6. února 1959.
3 VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1962, karton 367, sign. 30-2/4, Souhrnné dokumenty o vývozu, Přehled o vývozu vojenské techniky do kapitalistických států, 6. února 1959. VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1969, karton 172, Evidence GŠ/SMP-5 – vývozní skupina.
4 VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1964, karton 14, sign. 5/1-5, č.j. 02342/63, Speciální technika pro Jordánsko, 15. dubna 1964.
5 VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1966, karton 246, sl. G-7, Konkursní řízení zahraniční zakázky, 1. prosince 1966.
6 VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1968, karton 62, sl. 30-3/3, Výkazy jmenovitých položek za I. – IV. čtvrtletí 1965, 29. ledna 1966. VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1970, karton 143, sl. 30, Vývoz do KS.
7 VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1970, karton 143, sl. 30, Vývoz do KS, Vyjádření GŠ/SÚP k č.j. 04253 a 04254/1968 – Sekr NGŠ.
8 VÚA-VHA, MNO, VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1970, karton 144, sl. 30/3-17, Přehled technické pomoci, poskytované v současné době (1969–1970).
9 VÚA-VHA, MNO, 1974, karton 120, sl. 84/14, č.j. 008069/12-FMNO/14-1974, Přehled zahraničních odběratelů speciálního materiálu z ČSSR v letech 1970–1974.
10 Zídek & Sieber, *Československo a Blízký východ v letech 1948–1989*, pp.182–184.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Martin Smisek was born in 1985 and received a master's degree in aerospace engineering at the Czech Technical University in Prague in 2010. In addition to his regular job of a mechanical design engineer, he has written over 70 articles about contemporary armoured vehicles, modern air-launched weapons as well as Czechoslovak military history and local conflicts since 1945. He is the author of the ground-breaking book *Super Sabry nad Československem* (Super Sabres over Czechoslovakia) about US spyflights over Czechoslovakia in 1955. Martin Smisek is also a regular contributor of the Czech and Slovak leading military website www.valka.cz.